

# **The use of science jargon in advertisements for anti-wrinkle skin creams.**

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A sub-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the award of Masters of Science (Scientific Communication).

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# Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except when due reference is made in the text.



Madeleine F. Lowe



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# Abstract

The effect of science jargon in advertising was investigated to see whether jargon can be used to impress consumers and encourage them to buy.

A survey was given to 60 female subjects in the Canberra city region. This was done to investigate subjects' preferences for written advertisements with versus without jargon. Interviews were also conducted with retailers working in the cosmetics industry, or fields related to it, to see if they were knowledgeable about consumer buying behaviour.

The results revealed that a discrepancy exists regarding how potential consumers respond to jargon when purchasing cosmetic products, in particular anti-wrinkle skin cream, and how sellers think they respond. Consumers claimed to be knowledgeable about the meaning of the jargon words while sellers assumed that they had little knowledge. It was also found that jargon is only one factor to consider in the transfer of cosmetic products between buyers and sellers.

As consumers already claim to have a good knowledge of what jargon words mean and are willing to learn, future effort should be directed towards making more information about how cosmetic products work and regulations which govern their advertising and sale more readily available.

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## 1.1 Background to the study

Our society places a great emphasis on youth, beauty and vitality.

The pervasive youth culture tells us that "expression lines" and wrinkles that appear as the skin ages are unsightly and ugly. For this reason people are increasingly turning to cosmetic surgery and skin creams to make them look younger (Australian Consumers Association, 1990; Spowart and Matherstone, 1999).

The skin on the face is more fragile than the skin on most other parts of the body and is more susceptible to the aging process, hence there is a market for anti-wrinkle skin creams. The face is also one of the most exposed parts of the body. The combination of exposure to UV radiation, environmental factors, sickness or disease and natural aging acts to damage the skin (Australian Consumers Association, 1990; Hobbins, Eller and Gilchrist, 2000). As people age, collagen fibres in the dermal layer of the skin deteriorate and elastin fibres lose their elasticity (Pierard, Henry, Casteln, and Reis, 1998). The skin also retains less moisture, cell renewal slows and the skin becomes drier, rougher, thinner and looser. Wrinkles appear as the dermis bunches and folds underneath the epidermis.

There is a plethora of cosmetic bottles lined up in department stores, each competing to "tell you" how they can reduce wrinkles. The range of ingredients and treatments is growing. Competition between products has forced cosmetic companies to use slick marketing strategies to make their product stand out from the rest so that it will sell. The products look appealing because of their elaborate packaging. They also contain fragrances which make them smell enticing. Advertisements contain impressive "scientific claims", mostly unsubstantiated, which promise to "bring back your youthful glow" (Australian Consumers Association, 1990, p3). According to Hobbins (1997b, p2) anyone who watches morning

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TV knows that the leaders in the advertising industry put on white coats and use “sciencey” words to relieve us of billions of dollars a year.

Findings suggest, however, that apart from the psychological benefits of making you feel better about yourself because you are putting something expensive on your face, most of these treatments achieve little more than is achieved by ordinary, and often cheaper, moisturisers. Moisturisers are helpful to a limited extent in that they act by plumping up the epidermis making the skin look smoother and wrinkles less noticeable. For a cream or lotion to have any real effect it has to operate in the dermis and there is no solid evidence that they can do this (Australian Consumers Association, 1990).

According to the Australian Consumers Association (1998), some ingredients contained in the anti-wrinkle skin creams could help prevent wrinkles, but these ingredients are not present in high enough concentrations to be effective. Tretinoin (retin A) has been clinically shown to reduce wrinkles, but unfortunately it has a number of undesirable side effects and is only available on prescription. Alpha hydroxyl acids may help the skin look smoother and pinker, but may not reduce wrinkles. Anti-oxidants (especially vitamin C and E) show some promise in the future, but at the moment there is no good evidence of their effectiveness. If people are seriously determined to rid their faces of wrinkles, they will need to obtain prescription products, like tretinoin, or some form of skin surgery or face lift - and even these treatments won't prevent more from appearing in the future. Prevention is the best cure for wrinkles, namely wearing sun screen and a hat.

### *1.1.1 Regulations in advertising*

Although the recent deregulation in the cosmetic surgery industry frees doctors to use the same sorts of advertising tactics that are already being used by other organisations, rules to which doctors are expected to adhere are set by the medical boards/councils in their respective states. Two of

these rules include that a person must not advertise a medical practice or a medical service in a manner that:

1. Is false, misleading or deceptive (NSW, VIC, QLD, TAS) or
2. creates an unjustified expectation of beneficial treatments (NSW).

NSW in 1998 was the latest state to have its advertising deregulated (Ring, 1998, as cited in Ring, 1999).

Although doctors must adhere to these regulations, society has come to expect a lack of adherence from the mass media who market products, especially cosmetics (Windschuttle, 1998). With deregulation, doctors can pair their “trust-me-I’m-a-Doctor” persona with the associated “scientific authentic language” to promote their message to consumers. This is a very powerful brew as we see the doctor as a highly influential figure (Ring, 1999).

With regard to cosmetic products, Robinson (pers. comm., Jan 26, 2000), an employee of the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), states that the TGA is responsible for guidelines on what sort of advertising claim is acceptable and what is not. If a claim implies that a product inhibits, modifies or influences a physiological process then it is a therapeutic claim. Examples of therapeutic claims include “Eliminates, reduces, slows or reverses the aging process” (Australian Consumers Association, 1998, p.23). If a therapeutic claim is made then the product has to be regulated by the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 and has to be listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods. Statements associated with these products are required to be supported scientifically (M. Robinson, pers. comm., Jan 26, 2000).

If cosmetic companies make a cosmetic claim, as opposed to a therapeutic claim, then this is acceptable. Cosmetic claims suggest that changes are temporary and only occur on the skin’s surface. Examples of acceptable cosmetic claims include “helps prevent (reduce, slow) the signs (appearance)

of ageing (age lines, premature ageing)", "smooths wrinkles" and "makes you feel or look younger" (L. Punya, pers. comm., April 6, 2000).

The Cosmetic Claims Guidelines is a document giving guidance regarding what is a therapeutic claim and what is a cosmetic claim (Punya, L., Pers. comm., April 6, 2000). Labels on cosmetic products are also required by the TGA to have full ingredient listings (Australian Consumers Association, 1990).

## **1.2 Statement of the problem: the role of jargon**

Scientific jargon on cosmetics products and advertising material may be used as a tool to mislead consumers and encourage them to buy. This may occur irrespective of whether the product works better than a similar one not advertised using jargon.

Jargon is defined by the Macquarie Dictionary as "the language peculiar to a trade, profession, or other group" or "pretentious language abounding in uncommon or unfamiliar words" or interestingly as "unintelligible or meaningless talk or writing; gibberish" (Delbridge, et. al., 1984). Science jargon is commonly found in science textbooks, journals, magazines and newspapers.

Although jargon can be beneficial as a kind of verbal shorthand that allows members within a group to communicate with each other clearly, efficiently and quickly, it does have its pitfalls. Jargon can be pretentious and obscure for those not familiar with the language. It can also be used to give an air of profundity, authority and prestige to speakers and their subject matter. According to Lutz (1990, p. 4) "Jargon...often makes the simple appear complex, the ordinary profound, the obvious insightful. In this sense it is used not to express but impress".



Jargon words, which the consumer may not understand, are often used in advertising (Harris, 1983) to sell cosmetic products, like anti-wrinkle skin creams (Australian Consumers Association, 1990). *Estee Lauder*, for example, promotes a product called the “Nutritious Bio-Protein Moisture Complex” which contains “milk-derived complex (whey proteins and peptides)”. *Shiseido* similarly advertises a “Bio-Performance Advanced Super Revitalizer (cream) N”. According to *Shiseido*, it works by “encouraging your skin to look younger”. The “skin retexturing ingredient L-Arginine and the superior moisturising benefits of Super Bio-Hyaluronic Complex provide a real solution to rough dry skin”. Yet another example is *University Medical*, who advertise a product called “Face Life Serum C”. According to *University Medical* “this powerful anti-oxidant works with gentle Prima Hydroxy acids to visibly diminish the appearance of wrinkles, brighten skin, smooth fine lines and promote a youthful appearance”. These are only a few examples, which are reproduced in Appendix I.

Cosmetic companies are experts in the practice of attracting consumers’ attention while just falling short on misrepresenting the facts. Many cosmetic companies manage to advertise the benefits of anti-aging cosmetics in suitably vague terminology, such as “helps prevent wrinkles” or “minimises fine lines”. While such tactics are not illegal they are far from ethical (Australian Consumers Association, 1990, p.6).

Advertising claims are important as a large proportion, 38.6 percent, of consumers opting for cosmetic surgery first hear about the procedures from a story in the media or an advertisement (Health Care Complaints Commission, 1999). This situation is probably similar for cosmetic products such as anti-wrinkle skin creams.

Stating in jargon terms, in advertisements or on the product itself, what is contained in the anti-wrinkle skin cream also does not mean that these products are beneficial, even if the ingredients sound good (W. Evans, pers.

comm., 21 Feb, 2000). It is possible that by inserting technical terms, however, customers will be impressed and persuaded to buy.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether jargon is effective as a tool to impress consumers and encourage them to buy anti-wrinkle skin creams.

This study addresses three research questions:

1. Does science jargon in advertising material encourage consumers to purchase anti-wrinkle skin creams?
2. Are consumers influenced by the jargon words because they are impressed/unimpressed with the way the words sound or because they have a good knowledge of whether the ingredients, described using the jargon words, work?
3. Do retailers use jargon to sell cosmetic products and are they informed about the consumers' knowledge of the jargon words?

### **1.4 Method**

A survey format and interviews were used to investigate the research questions. For the surveys, female subjects were approached in the Canberra city region. Interviews were conducted with retailers of cosmetic products, a private consultant in the cosmetics industry and a science writer/broadcaster. Interviews investigated whether retailers are aware of consumer thought processes and also sought to discover their opinions on the role science jargon plays in advertising cosmetic products.

## **1.5 Limitations of the study**

For this study to be successful it was assumed that people would treat the hypothetical advertisements as if they were advertising real products. It was also assumed that the samples, which were small, were representative of the larger population that they came from and that the fabricated advertisements reflected a whole range of current advertisements for anti-wrinkle skin creams.

The study was limited because it was largely qualitative and not suited to statistical analyses. Sample sizes were also small. Additionally the survey was fabricated by the researcher and did not have an established history of usage.

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

This study is significant as it is important for consumers to know how cosmetic companies are affecting their intention to buy, which in turn can prevent them from being exploited. The cosmetics industry is often blamed for exploiting womens' insecurities about their appearance and for using marketing tactics to make money out of their preoccupations with youth, beauty and vitality (Wolf, 1990). By lowering their sense of self worth and encouraging discrimination on the basis of appearance and age, the cosmetics industry makes many women feel vulnerable and believe that life will substantially improve if they alter their bodies. Women especially have always been under great pressure to defy nature and conform to other peoples standards of physical appearance (Spowart and Mastrantone, 1999).

## **1.7 Overview of the thesis**

A further five chapters comprise this thesis. Chapter 2 contains a literature review relating to the research questions followed by the research hypothesis. Chapter 3 outlines the method of the study. Chapter 4 describes subjects' responses to the fabricated advertisements. Chapter 5 presents

information relating to the interviews collected from people working in the cosmetics industry, or fields related to it. Chapter 6, the final chapter, discusses the results and concludes the study.

## 2.1 Historical background

### 2.1.1 Why scientists use jargon

Scientific progress has done more than improve work efficiency and possibly, it has changed the vocabulary we use when we communicate with each other. It has changed "the way we talk, the way we write and the way we think" (McCune, 1999, p. 12). During the past hundred years scientific writing has evolved to a level where it is taken to be unassailable and the facts it claims to transmit are considered absolute and self-justifying. Today scientific writing is seen to be a model of authority and accuracy (Montgomery, 1989).

Scientists are regularly criticised for communicating their research using long, alien and unfamiliar scientific terms as opposed to plain, simple words that the general reader can understand (Wilkinson, 1992). Scientists erect "language barriers" between scientists working in different scientific disciplines and even higher ones between scientists and non-scientists. One way in which they do this is through the use of scientific jargon (Woolley, 1998).

Scientists are, however, strong advocates of the use of science jargon and they consider it to be necessary for a number of reasons. According to Wilkinson (1992) suggests that jargon is essential for labelling entities for which the language currently has no name. Science is associated with the innovation of new concepts, processes and entities. When biologists wanted a word for phagocyte, antigen, antibody or pheromone, for example, there were no words in the language to describe them. New scientific terms therefore had to be created to label them.

Scientific jargon also makes for economy. Seldom can one substitute a familiar word for an unfamiliar scientific term. "Erythrocytes" are "red



## Chapter 2: Background literature

### 2.1 Historical background

#### 2.1.1 *Why scientists use jargon*

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Scientific jargon also makes for economy. Seldom can one substitute a familiar word for an unfamiliar scientific term. “Erythrocytes” are “red

blood cells” and “plasma” is the “non cellular part of the blood”. More simply again, but less accurately, “plasma” is the “fluid part of the blood” (Wilkinson, 1992, p. 320). Using jargon is not only very economical in terms of word counts but, according to Montgomery (1989), its removal is performed at the expense of accuracy and detail. Knowledge is ultimately lost and information is sacrificed for accessibility for the general public.

If each scientist were expected to report his or her research in every day language it would be a burden on the scientist and on general readers. Wilkinson (1992) says that the general reader is not interested in the work of every scientist. He also says that our information systems would be overloaded if we were to have information available in plain and simple language as well as in scientific language, required for scientists. Not all scientists have the time, ability or inclination to write so that general readers can understand. Writing in this way can also be time consuming for the scientist.

While the use of jargon in communication between scientists can therefore be justified as a necessity, communication with a lay audience should be approached differently. Science for the general public could tolerate less detail and greater word counts if it means “conveying the message” in a more comprehensive manner (Wilkinson, 1992).

The point to emphasise here is that jargon is acceptable in technical papers as long as the audience understands what these terms really mean. It is therefore important for the communicator to find out everything they can about the technical knowledge of their audience (Allison, 1993).

### *2.1.2 Jargon influences the way we evaluate information*

The use of jargon can have an influence on how a person evaluates information being communicated to them. Nogrady (1998) states that subjects rate a short article containing more jargon as being more credible, yet less understandable, than one containing less jargon. This suggests that

science inspires faith in readers even if they do not fully understand what they are reading. Sacrificing jargon for everyday language may improve audience understanding and make science more accessible, but at the same time scientists may pursue this simplification at the expense of the perceived credibility of their work and themselves.

Specialised jargon languages can be purposefully used to perform desired functions, even if their ability to perform other functions is reduced or completely lost. This can be done in a manner which suits the communicator's purpose. Some jargon functions primarily to persuade or convince, such as the jargon of courtroom lawyers, advertisers or editorialists. Others, like the language of poetry, function to elicit emotional responses (Bross, Shapiro and Anderson, 1972). Jargon terms are often used by authors because they sound professional even if terms are ambiguous and prevent accurate communication (Ammons, 1998).

Jargon can also be used to make a practitioner or a treatment appear more credible. According to Atkinson and Carskaddon (1975), psychological counsellors were perceived by subjects to be more credible if they made use of jargon compared to speaking in layman's language. They suggest that this is because the subjects did not understand the technical language of the psychologist and therefore assumed that the psychologist must have greater knowledge of psychology than themselves. If the psychologist used layman's language, subjects may have felt that his or her knowledge was no greater than their own.

Kazdin and Cole (1981) suggest that jargon may imbue a procedure with a respectability which increases its favourable evaluation. When psychological treatments, used to alter classroom behaviour, were described using jargon rather than ordinary language, subjects rated the treatment more positively than when it was worded in ordinary language. Subjects listened to a tape recorded description of the behavioural treatment before making their ratings. The researchers used college students as subjects for



their study and suggest that this group may be more well informed than many consumers seeking treatment. For this reason they, compared with a less informed group, may be more comfortable listening to treatments phrased in jargon and rate the procedure more favourably.

### 2.1.3 *Science jargon is used in advertising*

Jargon words which the consumer may not understand are often used in advertising. Commercials for various kinds of waxes, for example, sometimes state that the product contains polymers. Harris (1983) says that the technical nature of the term and the fact that it is not commonly used means it is probably not well understood by most people. Its use suggests that the manufacturer has greater expertise in chemistry than the average consumer.

If something is advertised using a technical term we also tend to assume that it is very modern and based on the latest scientific research. We may be more likely to trust a company who provides us with scientific words. The readers of the advertisement are presumably aware that the term does not appear in advertisements for other brands of the same product. The jargon, therefore, serves as a linguistic demonstration of the company's expertise (Harris, 1983).

The converse of the "polymer" situation can occur in advertising when a descriptive phrase (periphrasis) is used, instead of the object's name, which would be readily understood by the audience. The result is a sort of "anti-jargon". Harris gives the example of one of the most common kinds of anti-jargon which involves referring to aspirin using phrases such as, "pain reliever" or "the pain reliever/ingredient most recommended by doctors". The use of a more indirect term implies that the ingredient is something very technical which the lay person could not possibly identify or understand. Because aspirin is well known, it makes no sense to refer to it other than by that name. As a result, the addressee could easily conclude that the "pain reliever" could not be just aspirin, but must be something

better. From this we can conclude that careful semantic selection can be used to convey information far beyond what appears to be the literal meaning of an advertisement (Harris, 1983).

How effective jargon is at selling depends on the type of product being sold. According to Hogge (1997, p. 17), “external products” - that is, products that are not consumed and do not have a direct effect on the health and well being of consumers, for example washing detergents, toothpastes, shampoo and cleaning aids used for household cleaning and washing, are not sold as effectively when jargon is used. People pay more attention to science and scientific procedures on the packaging when buying “internal products” - that is, products that the consumer ingests, such as health drinks and yoghurt.

Hogge (1997) believes that consumers may pay more attention to science if the product is associated with health and well being (internal products) because most people at some point in time have benefited from science to relieve sickness and pain. For this reason there is a positive association between “internal” products and science. People do not make this association with cleaning products. She also found that many more consumers buying internal products agreed that the science behind the claims made sense whereas less people purchasing external products agreed with this statement. Consumers were not easily persuaded or fooled and scientific claims and endorsements on the packaging were not taken at face value. A large proportion of participants in her study were attracted to the claims initially but the products soon lost credibility if they were not backed up by scientific argument.

Sometimes pictures are used to add strength to words in advertising.

Williamson (1983, p. 117), for example, describes a situation where the inner workings of a washing machine are displayed. Its secrets are supposedly revealed in an image where the machine’s outside is removed so we can penetrate the surface of science. This system is not comprehensible to a

person not familiar with the workings of electrical equipment. Numbers are also provided for the consumer to observe but, “who understands what the expressed claim of ‘800-1000 rpm’ really means in terms of drying washing?” These tactics are used in advertising because the numbers signify scientific fact and “objectivity”. The advertisement implies “proof” simply by “showing”, “there it is, it must be so”. What is happening, however, is that everything is revealed but nothing is explained.

Another example given by Williamson (1983, p. 118) describes an advertisement for *Vichy* skin care products. The advertisement claims to be “serious” and “scientific”. According to *Vichy*, “the secret of beautiful, healthy skin lies not in exotic sounding ingredients, or fancy bottles, but in scientifically developed and clinically tested preparations”. Williamson (1983) states that we are offered science “knowledge”, rather than exotic words. The diagram shows a magnified cross section of the skin with a caption stating, “to make skin care that works you need to understand the skin”, then underneath the diagram, “The skin is complex and very delicate”. We are told that the makers, *Vichy*, understand the skin. We, however, may not understand the skin and the diagram tells us nothing. It is just a picture of the skin, it shows us but it does not explain anything. Although the picture “denotes the skin” it “connotes science, facts and seriousness”. It illustrates the miraculousness of science but does not explain it to us. The skin is seen to be complex and only science can be used to explain it. Science implies complexity and proof which in turn is used to impress us (Williamson, 1983). These advertisements described by Williamson (1983) are reproduced in Appendix II.

#### 2.1.4 *How the public analyses information*

The “elaboration likelihood model” is important for determining how people respond to advertisements, both printed (newspapers, magazines, brochures, and product labels) and verbal (radio and television). The “elaboration likelihood”, or how deeply a person analyses information is a



function of their motivation and ability to interpret and understand the message being communicated (Cacioppo and Petty, 1984).

The “elaboration likelihood model” states that consumers can take either the “central route” or the “peripheral route” to persuasion. The “central route” involves the consumer consciously deliberating upon the merit, content and logic of the information provided. People taking this route will thus scrutinise and critically analyse information in advertisements before choosing to buy a product. The quality of the argument is important for those taking the “central route”. People are sometimes presented with information quickly or are presented with information that they do not fully understand. Often they do not have the motivation or the ability to critically analyse information. As a result they take the “peripheral route” to persuasion and rely on peripheral cues such as the perceived authority of the speaker, what the actor is wearing, for example a white lab coat, the expertise or the attractiveness of the communicator and the use of jargon. The consumer will form attitudes not on the processing of message arguments but rather on simple visual cues associated with that message (Cacioppo and Petty, 1984).

The way in which a message is interpreted may be more complicated than is explained by the “elaboration likelihood model”. According to Irwin and Wynne (1996) both science and the general public are diverse and very changeable. Often in the field relating to public understanding, science is seen as a unified and cleanly bounded body of knowledge and method, but science is more realistically a diffuse collection of institutions and areas of specialised knowledge. Theoretical interpretations of these institutions and areas also differ. Additionally the “public” is often seen as being one “homogenous mass” as opposed to a diverse group (Irwin and Wynne, 1996).

Even if two people have enough knowledge and time to process information via the “central route”, they will still be processing information



quite differently depending on what sources and how many sources of information they have encountered. A brochure from a cosmetics company describing the benefits of cosmetic products and how they work will, for example, provide a different perspective regarding cosmetic products compared to a magazine critique making consumers aware of the value and dangers of what they are buying, for example *Choice* magazine.

## 2.2 Summary

Progress in science has changed the way we communicate with each other. Scientists are often criticised for using jargon which isolates them from the general public and sometimes even each other. In some cases the use of jargon can be justified, but when communicating with the general public it should be avoided.

Science is a model of authority and accuracy and science jargon can be used to impress a lay audience. A piece of writing is seen to be more credible if jargon is used. Buyers may also be encouraged to purchase products advertised using jargon.

Some people are more knowledgeable about the jargon words used in advertisements and will take the “central route” to persuasion. Their choices are influenced not by peripheral cues, such as jargon, like those taking the “peripheral route”, but by their prior knowledge of the jargon words and how items described using the words work.

This thesis investigates whether the use of jargon in advertising encourages consumers to purchase anti-wrinkle skin creams and whether consumers’ decisions when doing so are knowledge based or occur because they are impressed with the jargon words in the advertisement. It also looks at whether retailers use jargon as a tool to sell cosmetic products and if retailers are informed about consumers’ knowledge of the jargon words.

# Chapter 3: Research methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology of the study which investigates the research questions:

1. Does science jargon in advertising material encourage consumers to purchase anti-wrinkle skin creams?
2. Are consumers influenced by the jargon words because they are impressed/unimpressed with the way the words sound or because they have a good knowledge of whether the ingredients, depicted by the jargon words, work?
3. Do retailers use jargon to sell cosmetic products and are they informed about the consumers' knowledge of the jargon words?

Surveys and interviews were performed to investigate these questions. In the surveys subjects were presented with two advertisements for anti-wrinkle skin creams. Advertisements differed with respect to the jargon words, one containing jargon and one not containing jargon. Subjects were then asked questions about their preferences for the creams being advertised. Interviews were also conducted with individuals employed in the cosmetics industry, or related fields.

## 3.2 Research method and design

### 3.2.1 Consumer surveys

The first survey was conducted between the 13th of December and the 17th of December 1999. Based on the results of the first survey, a second survey was conducted between the 27th and the 29th of January 2000.

Cross-sectional surveys, which involved collecting information at one point in time, were used. The surveys were self designed and the advertisements were fabricated by the researcher because she did not want to replicate an advertisement that is already on the market.

In this study female subjects were approached as the researcher walked around the Canberra city region. She selected the first person who she encountered who filled the selection brief but did not select people who were in a large group or who appeared to be in a hurry. and asked if they would be prepared to participate in a survey about anti-wrinkle skin creams. If they said yes they were handed a piece of paper containing the two advertisements. They were asked to read the advertisements and answer questions about them. After selecting either advertisement in response to each of the questions in the survey an open-ended question (see section 3.2.2) was asked to find out why subjects selected the advertisement they did (see appendices III and IV for the text of the surveys).

Such a survey was used because it is an inexpensive and a rapid means of data collection and allows for predictions on the basis of a small sample. The survey was administered face to face which provided access to non-verbal cues. It also permitted subjects to read the sample advertisements and ponder over them while questions were asked (as recommended by Creswell, 1994).

### **3.2.2 Methodology**

The differences between open-ended questions and closed-ended questions are explored by Sides (1991) and Seidman (1991) "An open ended question...establishes the territory to be explored while allowing the participant to take any direction he or she wants. It does not presume an answer"(Seidman, 1991, p.62). Closed-ended questions alternatively allow the respondent to answer items by marking categories, for example by indicating 'yes' or 'no', checking an item from a list of possible responses, or by providing a short response"(Seidman, 1991).



Open-ended and closed-ended questions each have advantages and disadvantages. These are outlined by Adams and Schvaneveldt (1991). An open-ended question allows for a greater depth and authenticity of responses but takes more time and motivation for the interviewee to complete. Open-ended questions are useful for checking for the level and type of information possessed, as closed-ended questions sometimes force respondents to select choices when none of these really apply. It is also unknown why respondents have made these choices. Closed-ended questions are, however, advantageous because of the ease of completing the questions, brevity of response time, promotion of objectivity, specification of the frame of reference for the subject and the ease in scoring, coding and tabulation. It is easier to relate closed-ended questions directly to a hypothesis because the data is quantifiable.

For the purpose of this survey closed-ended questions were used to encourage consumers to choose a particular advertisement in response to each of the questions. This made it easier to tabulate responses for each question. Following this, an open-ended question asking why consumers responded in the way they did, was chosen as it allowed the researcher to look for mechanisms underlying their choice, for example whether their choice was made on the basis of the jargon words or some other factor that was different between the two advertisements. Information about their perceived level of knowledge of the jargon words was also obtained. Open-ended questions are also ideal because they permit the researcher to explore attitudes towards science jargon and its effect on advertising - an area where there is a considerable paucity of literature.

Likert scales, allowing subjects to rate preferences for each advertisement, usually on a five to seven point scale (Nogard, 1998; Kazdin and Cole, 1981), were not used because the researcher wanted subjects to select either one of the advertisements before exploring attitudes further. Instead, a forced choice procedure which encouraged subjects to choose between two

options was adopted, following Hogge (1997) who also investigated consumer attitudes towards scientific jargon.

### *3.2.3 Interviews with retailers in the cosmetics industry*

Four structured interviews were conducted with retailers in the cosmetics industry. These were carried out to investigate what factors, in their opinion, influence consumers' purchasing behaviour, especially with regard to anti-wrinkle skin creams. The role that science jargon plays in advertising was addressed.

Guidelines for constructing interviews were obtained from Sides (1991). Interview questions were identical, allowing for comparison of results between subjects. Questions were all open-ended. When novel points of interest arose, additional questions were sometimes added, or subjects were asked to elaborate on or clarify complex issues. Regardless of deviations occurring while answering a particular question, all of the planned questions were asked in the same order. The core questions that these retailers were asked is given in appendix V.

Interviews were also carried out with a private consultant in the cosmetics industry and a science writer/broadcaster. Questions were open-ended and focused on information contained in their publications and the results of the consumer surveys. The text of these questions is given in appendices VI and VII.

## **3.3 Sample and population**

For the first survey, 40 female subjects were interviewed in the Canberra city region. The selection had no age bias, provided that subjects were in their mid-teens or older. There was no bias towards any particular occupation or education level. Subjects ranged from 15 to over 50 years of age. Surveys from another 20 subjects were collected in a similar manner. The second survey was modified on the basis of results obtained in the first

survey. Subjects in the second survey ranged from 20 to over 50 years of age.

Three of the four retailers in the cosmetics industry were approached in their work environment and a suitable interview time was arranged. The fourth interview took place over the phone as the interviewee resided outside of Canberra. Interviews with the private consultant and the science writer/broadcaster were conducted using email. They were approached after having read some of their publications relating to the research area.

### **3.4 Data collection procedure**

#### **3.4.1 Survey procedure**

Female subjects were approached randomly. Surveys usually took less than five minutes of their time.

Following the recommendations of Sides (1991) and Seidman (1991); when conducting surveys, neutral clothing (no extremes of fashion for example revealing top or short skirt) was worn with no excess make-up and accessories. This was done as it was recognised that first impressions count and that it is important not to startle subjects or create a negative impression. The interviewer endeavoured to create a “nameless” impression and this was maintained throughout the interaction. Subjects were provided with an indication of the amount of time required to complete the task.

Once subjects had agreed to participate in the survey they were handed a piece of paper containing two advertisements for anti-wrinkle skin creams and were asked to read them (see appendices III and IV). Subjects were then verbally asked questions while they were allowed to observe the advertisements.



### 3.4.2 Interview technique

When interviewing, the introduction and dress code were the same as were applied for the survey.

Questions were open-ended and allowed subjects to express beliefs and recommendations, because they were not confined to yes-no answers. It was continually stressed that there were no right or wrong answers and that they could choose to remain anonymous. Questions were clear, simple and easy to understand. There were no double-barrelled questions.

The interviewer endeavoured to listen actively to what the interviewee was saying to assess whether the answer was as detailed and as complete as thought necessary. If it was not the interviewee was asked to elaborate on an answer. The interviewer did not interrupt participants while they were talking. Instead she followed up when the opportunity arose, so that the participant's train of thought was not broken. An effort was also made to keep participants focused on the subject of the interview.

The interviewer, on occasion, shared experiences, as at times these experiences can connect to those of the participant and encourage them to continue. Effort was made to avoid reinforcing participants' replies, either positively or negatively, as this can distort their responses. Silence was tolerated and the interviewer endeavoured to give the interviewee time before responding, even if this felt uncomfortable. No impromptu explanations of questions or possible replies were suggested. These procedures were carried out by the author so that there were no biases in measurement and so equivalent responses could be grouped for analysis.

At the end of both the interviews and the surveys subjects were thanked for their time and informed about the importance of their information for the success of the study. If interested, they were provided with more background information about the study.



### **3.5 Data processing and analysis**

#### ***3.5.1 Analysis of surveys***

The number of subjects selecting each advertisement in response to individual questions in the surveys were documented. Responses to open-ended questions were summarised to give an overall impression of how science jargon is used in advertising to influence preferences for anti-wrinkle skin creams. Trends relating to age, occupation and education level were investigated.

#### ***3.5.2 Analysis of interviews***

Information on how to analyse interview material was obtained from Seidman (1991). Received interviews were transcribed. The lengthy amounts of text were then reduced to what was considered most important and interesting. From this a narrative was created, while maintaining the “voice of the participant”. The researcher then worked with excerpts from the interviews and observed connections or differences among them in response to corresponding questions.

### **3.6 Limitations of the research methodology**

The sample size was small, consisting of 40 subjects in the first survey and 20 subjects in the second survey. The surveys and interviews were only carried out at one point in time and in one location. No attempt was made to research in other cities and at different times of the year. Only trends relating to age, occupation and education level were observed.

The choices subjects’ made between the two advertisements were clearly explained to be because of differences between them. Order effects, therefore, were not deemed to be a factor affecting the outcome of this study. Subjects, for example, may choose the advertisement they read first or the one that is most recent in their mind, being the one read last.

The results of this study are discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

### 4.1 Introduction

Surveys were performed to investigate the first two of three research questions:

1. Does science jargon in advertising material encourage consumers to purchase anti-wrinkle skin creams?
2. Are consumers influenced by the jargon words because they are impressed/unimpressed with the way the words sound or because they have a good knowledge of whether ingredients, described using the jargon words, work?

### 4.2 The first study

Forty female subjects participated in the first study. They ranged in age from 15 to over 50 years of age. When they were asked the first question, *Which advertisement do you prefer?*, 20 out of the 40 subjects selected advertisement one, containing jargon, and the other 20 selected advertisement two, not containing jargon.

In response to question two, *Based on the information in the two advertisements which product would you buy?*, 20 responded with advertisement one, 19 with advertisement two, and one refused to make a choice (see Table 4.1). The reasons subjects made the choices they did were of interest and will be discussed in section 4.3 below.

Only four out of 40 subjects responded to question one in a different manner from question two.

# Chapter 4: Survey results

## 4.1 Introduction

Surveys were performed to investigate the first two of three research questions:

1. Does science jargon in advertising material encourage consumers to purchase anti-wrinkle skin creams?
2. Are consumers influenced by the jargon words because they are impressed/unimpressed with the way the words sound or because they have a good knowledge of whether ingredients, described using the jargon words, work?

## 4.2 The first study

Forty female subjects participated in the first study. They ranged in age from 15 to over 50 years of age. When they were asked the first question, *Which advertisement do you prefer?*, 20 out of the 40 subjects selected advertisement one, containing jargon, and the other 20 selected advertisement two, not containing jargon.

In response to question two, *Based on the information in the two advertisements which product would you buy?*, 20 responded with advertisement one, 19 with advertisement two, and one refused to make a choice (see table 4.1). The reasons subjects made the choices they did were of interest and will be discussed in section 4.3 below.

Only four out of 40 subjects responded to question one in a different manner from question two.

Subjects, in question three, were asked, *Which of the two advertisements is more understandable?* Nine subjects chose advertisement one, 28 chose advertisement two and three refused to choose either (see table 4.1). This result indicates that more people thought the advertisement not containing jargon (advertisement two), was more understandable than the one containing jargon (advertisement one). Again the reasons for making these choices was of interest (see section 4.3 below).

**Table 4.1: Responses to the first survey**

Question	Advertisement 1	Advertisement 2	Neither
1	20	20	0
2	20	19	1
3	9	28	3

Subjects’ preferences for advertisements for all questions.  
Note: Only four subjects gave different responses for question one from question two.

**4.3 Comments in response to the questions**

After choosing an advertisement, subjects were asked why they responded in the way that they did. Responses to questions one and two were quite similar and were grouped together for the purpose of this investigation.

**4.3.1 Choice: Advertisement one**

People who selected advertisement one, using jargon, commented that the advertisement contained more information about what was in the anti-wrinkle skin cream and that it was more detailed.

*At least it tells you what's in it...I would never buy something if I didn't know what's in it.*  
*It's got more information.*



*...more detailed, it gives more information and I understand it better.*

*Because I know what's in it.*

*It kind of gives you information like what's in it. Not that I have a clue what they are. It just sounds like they know more.*

Others commented about how impressive the words sounded or about how effective they believed the ingredients in the skin cream to be.

*It sort of explains things a bit more... I know anti-oxidants are good for the skin.*

*They're the same thing but (1) sounds better. Big names sound cool.*

*Tells me what it uses, more information I can chase up, even if I don't know what they are.*

*Sounds more...smarter or something.*

Two of the 20 subjects selecting advertisement one said that they chose the advertisement for reasons that were unrelated to the amount of jargon words present. A third subject mentioned other factors only when asked at the end of the survey if there were *Any other comments?*, but her primary decision was based on the jargon. All three of these subjects said that they were turned off by the phrases in advertisement two, *sloughing off dead skin cells* and *plumping up the layers of the skin*. One subject also liked advertisement one because the title *Youthful Look* sounded better. Another added that she would make her choice on the basis of the packaging, the brand and the price in addition to the ingredients being outlined in the advertisement.

#### **4.3.2 Choice: Advertisement two**

Subjects who selected advertisement two, in response to questions one and two in the survey, commented on the simple, non-technical nature of the advertisement.

*One has more jargon, two is more simple so I can understand.*

*It is not full of bull shit. The first one is just trying to make people go 'wow'!.*

*The first one sounds too complicated, waffles on.*

*It's not so technical.*

Nine of the 20 subjects who selected advertisement two gave reasons not related to the jargon words for choosing the advertisement. Three of these chose advertisement two because it contained the word *vitamins*. One of the above three also mentioned that they liked the advertisement because of the phrase *sloughing off dead skin cells*. A fourth subject was also attracted by this phrase. A further three chose advertisement two because it indicates a 50% *reduction in wrinkles in only two weeks*. Another subject chose advertisement two because of the title *Rejuvenate Now*. A final subject commented that the decision for buying a product would be made more on the basis of packaging and presentation, as opposed to the wording of the advertisement.

It is important to note that although approximately equal numbers preferred and would choose to buy each advertisement, the majority, being 29 out of 40 subjects, mentioned the jargon words as being important in their decision.

#### **4.3.3 Understanding advertisements**

In response to question three, *Which of the two advertisements is more understandable?*, subjects selecting advertisement two (not containing jargon), commented that this advertisement was easier to understand.

*It is more simple for someone like me.*

*Because the language is more straight forward.*

*Because they use more normal language.*

Those selecting advertisement one (containing jargon) made comments like:

*It's more descriptive.*

*Don't know. I can understand both. Neither is truthful.*

Those who refused to make a choice between the two advertisements indicated that each advertisement could be interpreted in the same way.

*Both are understandable.*

*None are very clear.*

*Both make sense.*

#### **4.4 Construction of the second survey**

In the first study only four out of 40 subjects responded differently to question one from question two. Question one was decided to be obsolete as preference effects were found to be the same as buying effects. Question one was therefore removed from the second survey.

The wording in the advertisements was also modified. This was done because subjects were making choices on the basis of other factors that were different between the two advertisements as opposed to the jargon words. Both advertisements in the second survey were given the same name, *Youthful Look*. Non-jargon containing phrases, that were different between the two advertisements, were changed or 'softened' so that they did not stand out as much. *Sloughing off dead skin cells* was changed to *removing dead skin cells* and *plumping up the layers of the skin* was changed to *rejuvenating the layers of the skin*. *Vitamins* was also changed to *nutrients*.

It also became apparent, by conducting the first study, that some subjects selected a particular advertisement because they had some knowledge of the ingredients described using the jargon words and not because they were impressed with the way they sound. In the modified survey, if subjects

made mention of the jargon words in response to question one, they were asked to comment about their depth of understanding of these words. The questions used to elicit this information will be described in section 4.5 The second survey is shown in Appendix IV.

### 4.5 The second survey

Twenty female subjects participated in the second survey. When subjects were asked, *Based on the information provided in the two advertisements which product would you buy?*, 12 said that they would buy the product advertised in advertisement one and eight said that they would buy the product advertised in advertisement two (see table 4.3).

**Table 4.3: Results of the second survey**

Question	Advertisement 1	Advertisement 2	Neither
1	12	8	0
2	2	15	3

Subjects’ preferences for advertisements in response to questions one and two.

Once subjects had made their choice between the two advertisements in response to question one, further probing took place to investigate why they chose the advertisement they did.

#### 4.5.1 Choice: Advertisement one

Those who selected advertisement one, in response to question one, and mentioned jargon as their reason for doing so were asked the following: *Did you select advertisement one because you were impressed with the way the words sound or because you know how the ingredients, described using the words, work?*



Eleven out of the 12 subjects selecting advertisement one did so because of the jargon words. Out of these 11, seven said that they had some knowledge of the words and four said that they had no knowledge. The remaining subject did not mention the jargon words as their reason for selecting the advertisement and was not asked this question (See table 4.4a).

**Table 4.4a: Knowledge of subjects selecting advertisement one**

Knowledge level	Number of subjects
Knowledge of words	7
No knowledge of words	4
No reference to words	1

Subjects’ (N=12) perceived level of knowledge of the jargon words.

**4.5.2 Choice: Advertisement two**

Those who selected advertisement two, in response to question one, and mentioned jargon as their reason for doing so were asked the following: *Did you select advertisement two because you were unimpressed with the way the words in advertisement one sound or because you know how the ingredients, described using the words, work?*

Six out of eight subjects selecting advertisement two did so because of the jargon words. Out of these six subjects, four said that they had some knowledge of the words and two said that they had no knowledge of the words. Two subjects made no reference to the words and were not asked this question (See table 4.4b).

In summary, it was found that 17 of the 20 subjects who participated in the second survey selected an advertisement for reasons related to the jargon words.

**Table 4.4b: Knowledge of subjects selecting advertisement two**

Knowledge level	Number of subjects
Knowledge of words	4
No knowledge of words	2
No reference to words	2

Subjects’ (N=8) perceived level of knowledge of the jargon words

**4.5.3 Understanding advertisements**

When subjects were asked in question two, *Which of the two advertisements is more understandable?*, two responded with advertisement one, containing jargon, and 15 responded with advertisement 2, not containing jargon. Three refused to choose either advertisement (Table 4.3).

**4.6 Comments in response to questions in the second survey**

After selecting a particular advertisement, subjects were asked why they responded in the way they did.

**4.6.1 Choice: Advertisement one**

People who selected advertisement one made comments like:

*Because they at least try to provide some explanation as to why they do it.*  
*I like a more scientific approach.*

Subjects who indicated that they had some knowledge of the meaning of the jargon words made comments like:

*It explains what the cream was made from so it gives you the opportunity to research.*

Other subjects mentioned that you need to be able to read about the ingredients so you can look for possible allergies and side effects, for example retin A causes the skin to peel and is dangerous during pregnancy.

Those who said they did not have knowledge of the words but were impressed with the way they sound made comments like:

*All these funny words, they sound good. I always get taken by the alpha hydroxyl things...just impressed with the way they sound really.*

Only one subject chose advertisement one for reasons not related to the jargon words. This subject selected the advertisement because she liked the phrase *chase away wrinkles and fine lines*. Another two, although selecting advertisement one because of the words, made mention of other factors either at the end of the survey, when asked if there are *Any other comments?*, or during the interview after having discussed their main reasons for choosing the advertisement. One subject, in addition to selecting advertisement one, *because it tells you what's in it*, also liked it because it says *clinically proven*. The other mentioned that they liked this advertisement because it claims to leave you with *dewy, more youthful looking skin* and because it is an *exclusive formula*. Advertisement two was considered less preferable by the same subject because it claims to have *essential nutrients*, without explaining what the nutrients are essential for.

#### 4.6.2 Choice: Advertisement two

Common responses from people selecting advertisement two were:

*Two is more straight forward*

*Because it's simply written*

*It doesn't require the knowledge of the terms.*



Those who selected advertisement two and indicated that they had some knowledge of the words made comments like:

*I know retin A makes the skin red and peely. They're just like moisturisers really.*

*I have read a book about alpha hydroxyl acids being bad for you. Even though it (1) sounds more informed.*

Those who indicated that they had no knowledge made comments like:

*Because the first one is trying to throw big, fancy words at you and expecting you to be impressed by it.*

Two subjects selected advertisement two for reasons unrelated to the jargon words. One did so because the advertisement says that the cream contains *essential nutrients* and that it *rejuvenates the layers of the skin*. The other subject selected advertisement two because it states that the skin will *possess new life and vitality* and because they felt that they would see the results immediately. One of the subjects who selected advertisement two because of the jargon words, also mentioned afterwards, when asked if there were *Any other comments?*, that they preferred the advertisement because it says that the skin will *possess new life and vitality*.

#### 4.6.3 Understanding advertisements

Those who selected advertisement two in response to question two, *Which of the two advertisements is more understandable?* made comments like:

*Because I can understand the words.*

*Because it doesn't have all those words...its simpler, it is not as wordy. It says it straight out.*



The few who selected advertisement one made comments like:

*...more detail, it tells you what they do.*

It was interesting to note that six out of the 20 subjects said, without prompting, that they would not buy anti-aging creams at all.

*I don't believe in anti-aging creams.*

## 4.7 Summary

This chapter examined responses to surveys that were administered to female subjects in the Canberra city region. The first survey was modified as subjects made choices between the two advertisements not on the basis of the jargon words but because of other differences, like the title and variations in the wording of non-jargon containing phrases. These differences were put in place to disguise the purpose of the study. One of the questions in the first study was also found to be obsolete. In the second survey, further probing took place to investigate whether subjects made their choice between the two advertisements because they were impressed/unimpressed with the way the jargon words sounded or because they had a greater understanding of the meaning of the words.

Seventeen of the 20 subjects participating in the second survey selected an advertisement on the basis of the jargon words. Subjects selecting advertisement one (using jargon) did so because it contained more information about what was in the anti-wrinkle skin cream and because it was more detailed. It also allowed them to research ingredients for possible allergies and side effects. Some indicated that they were impressed with the way the jargon words sounded. Subjects selecting advertisement two (not using jargon) did so because it was easier to understand and did not require knowledge of the words. Some selected advertisement two because they knew that the ingredients in advertisement one were bad for you.

## Chapter 5: Interviews

Fifteen of the 20 subjects participating in the second survey said that advertisement two was more understandable compared to advertisement one. Two subjects said that advertisement one was more understandable, while three subjects refused to choose either advertisement.

Chapter 5 will discuss the results of interviews that took place with retailers in the cosmetics industry. It will also discuss interviews with a private consultant in the cosmetics industry and a science writer/broadcaster.

Interviews were used to investigate the third research question:

Do retailers use jargon to sell cosmetic products and are they informed about the consumers' knowledge of the jargon words?

### 5.2 Semi-structured interviews with retailers.

#### 5.2.1 Interviews with the director of the Parist company, Mr Will Evans

Will Evans is the Director of the Parist company. Twenty-five years ago he commenced producing Adifray skin care products, which, according to him, are a range of pure and safe cosmetics and toiletries. Evans is a chemist and compared to the retailers' knowledge about the chemical make-up of cosmetic products. He, as a consequence, is more concerned about producing products that are "natural, safe and highly effective", as opposed to looking at what makes a product attractive to consumers from a sales point of view.

I asked: In your opinion, what influences consumers to buy one cosmetic product instead of another?

Will: ...I think consumers are most influenced by the feature ingredients in products. Branding is certainly important...but, if they're looking within a brand, I think it's the feature ingredients.

# Chapter 5: Interviews

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores responses to the semi-structured interviews that took place with retailers working in the cosmetics industry. Interview questions were framed in response to replies to the consumer surveys. Results of these were discussed in the previous chapter. Interviews were also conducted with a private consultant and a science writer/broadcaster.

Interviews were used to investigate the third research question:

Do retailers use jargon to sell cosmetic products and are they informed about the consumers' knowledge of the jargon words?

## 5.2 Semi-structured interviews with retailers.

### 5.2.1 Interview with the director of the Purist company, Mr Will Evans

Will Evans is the Director of the Purist company. Twenty-five years ago he commenced producing *Alchemy* skin care products, which, according to him, are a range of pure and safe cosmetics and toiletries. Evans is a chemist and compared to the retailers has more knowledgeable about the chemical make-up of cosmetic products. He, as a consequence, is more concerned about producing products that are “*natural, safe and highly effective*”, as opposed to looking at what makes a product attractive to consumers from a sales point of view.

I asked: In your opinion, what influences consumers to buy one cosmetic product instead of another?

*Will. ...I think consumers are most influenced by the feature ingredients in products. Branding is certainly important...then, if they're looking within a brand, I think it's the feature ingredient.*



**Mad.** So people are quite knowledgeable of what's in the products and they will seek to explore these things?

**Will.** Consumers have very little knowledge about the base of all cosmetic products, what sorts of functional ingredients are used in them, about emulsifiers and preservatives and humectants and pH adjusters and so forth and tend to be quite baffled with ingredient disclosures on products, and their eyes just alight onto things that they know.

Evans explained that these things are generally the natural sounding ingredients, including herbs and protein. According to him these are generally used as a marketing handle by which the cosmetic companies sell the products. He continued:

*The big thing though, as far as we're concerned, is that those feature ingredients are used in minuscule amounts-things are marketed as though they have got a lot of aloe in them, or rosemary in them, or lots of herbs in them, or what-ever, but those things are generally there in ineffectual, tiny amounts. [When] we feature an ingredient we say how much is in there. We also only use ingredients which have a proven beneficial effect when applied externally, and we use them in concentrations at which they will have that effect.*

Will Evans does not agree with the current disclosure regulations, which state the requirements for ingredients legally to be listed on cosmetic products. As a company, Purist has been making submissions to regulatory bodies to try and modify these regulations and provide consumers with more information.

*Now, the way in which the ingredient disclosure regulations have been formulated, the way in which ingredients legally have to be listed is in descending order of amount until you get to one percent, below one percent you can shift them about however you like. But the consumer doesn't know where that one percent level is. As a company we have been making*



*submissions to the regulatory bodies since 1993 when the regulations came into force, saying that for instance, you can get two products that are identically labelled disclosed with everything in exactly the same order and the value of the ingredients in one could be ten times the value of the ingredients in the other.*

His company suggests that a cut off point be indicated on cosmetic products so consumers know how much of an ingredient is contained in it.

*Generally, most of the ingredients, and virtually all of the ingredients that are attractive to people are further down the list. Often that one percent can start pretty high up; [it] can seem as though there is some, you know, decent amount in there, but there is not.*

I then asked him why complex words like 'retin A', 'alpha hydroxyl acids' and 'antioxidants' need to be written on the product or in advertising material. He said that these are usually listed because of the interest that a company has in patenting products to make a profit.

*They make their money often on these special sounding ingredients. Now they are continually, they have lots of activity in the patent area, so they're always looking for new ingredients, or new mixtures of ingredients, new forms of ingredients, new ways of presenting them so they've got some form of patent protection on that, so that they can then spend their marketing dollars on it and know that they have got it, you know, rather to themselves.*

Evans says that companies give simple ingredients their own fancy name so that they can market them. Ingredients that are commonly available are not used.

*There are a lot of really fantastic natural ingredients, sort of commonly available ingredients, that cosmetics companies don't tend to use much or*

*feature much because any man, any body can use them, so that there is no particular advantage in it for them.*

Will was then asked if he thought that consumers know what these long words mean. The response that he gave was that generally they don't. Instead consumers pay attention to what is in vogue and, according to him, the cosmetic companies are the ones who make them in vogue.

*I think that the marketing arms of these companies are very strong.*

*They've got lots of dollars with which to advertise, and, you know, a big part of the reason for that is they spend very little on their ingredients that go in the bottle. But I don't think that consumers know very much, it is more things that are in vogue, and the cosmetic companies are the people who make them in vogue, you know vitamin C and things like that.*

Will states that things are only in vogue for a limited period of time before something else becomes fashionable. He also says that ingredients are the only things that manufacturers can save on.

*It's just a continually sort of changing feast of looking for new ingredients that will have a benefit for consumers. You look at any cosmetic product for instance, and there's, you know, the direct costs of the packaging, the labour to make it, and the ingredients. That doesn't really matter who you are - as soon as you are up into reasonable production numbers, the value, the cost of the packaging and the cost of labour are very similar. The only area where manufacturers can really save is on ingredients. And that's what they do. And the way in which they do that is by using fairly similar sorts of base formulations, all of which will function quite effectively, you know, shampoos, conditioners, moisturiser creams, the whole lot. But they don't put any, they put virtually none of the really valuable ingredients which are going to provide the skin with, sort of, ongoing nourishment and nutrition.*



Next I requested Will to comment on what approach he used to sell more of his products to consumers. He said that because they are a small company with little capital they find it difficult to advertise in the way most companies do. Putting a one page ad in *Cleo* or *Cosmo* for example will cost about fifteen thousand dollars. *Alchemy* instead focuses on their target market. These are people who are very discerning about what they use and are prepared to look more deeply into what it is that they are buying.

Will was then asked about how his company researched what consumers might be attracted to when buying a product. He says that he is more concerned about his passion for starting a business as opposed to looking at what was attractive for consumers in the sales line. He admits that his company probably lacks marketing skills. Evans also hopes that he can educate the public and make them more discerning about what they buy.

*We don't do the same tricks that other companies do. We stand up to very high scrutiny and we hope that with, you know, products in the market place and with things like this and getting publicity and so forth that it will be an education campaign. [We hope] people will start to have a look more deeply into the products they use and start to question manufacturers of the products they use. Vitamin E, for instance, people love vitamin E, but you know, when you have a look at how much vitamin E is in the cream that you're buying [when] it says that it is vitamin E cream, they won't tell you, it won't say and it'll be, in virtually all instances, very small, because it's a very expensive ingredient.*

Will Evans then discussed the quality of his products, compared to those of other companies. He says that his products are of very high quality because *Alchemy* spend more on the ingredients that they put in the bottle, as opposed to the packaging and advertising.

He also informs the interviewer that his company advertises using a web site, which is a fairly new initiative. With the limited funds available they

find it best to advertise using journals like *Nature* and *Health*. The consumers who buy these are their target market. Advertising in this way is cheaper compared to placing full page advertisements in glossy magazines.

Before terminating the interview I asked Will Evans if he thought that consumers believe in anti-wrinkle creams. He concluded that they do because they continue to buy them. He also states that his company uses high quality ingredients and uses them in decent concentrations.

*In the aging creams? Well, clearly they do, because they keep buying them. They see investment in their future. But when you look at the special ingredients that are available - because they're the things around which people buy things, and around which these big companies market things, we have a look at all of those and choose the ones which have the most beneficial effect when applied externally. The best value to the consumer are things like avocado oil and unsaponifiables and d panthenol (pro-vitamin B5) and jojoba oils and vitamin E as well. We use things that have a proven effect and we use a number of them, not just one of them, and we use them in decent concentrations.*

Evans stated that other factors are also important when producing cosmetic products, such as stability.

*A thing like vitamin C is extremely unstable and, you know, you put one percent in a cream on the day that you make it and a week later it has gone down to point seven, and after a month it's point five, and you know pretty soon you've got a very small amount in there. And often with those sorts of things too, the whole formulation has to be structured around that one ingredient and you're really restricted then in what you can use. You often have to make the formula very, very simple, or add other things that might, for instance, react with the vitamin C. A lot of oils that are used in cosmetics, evening primrose oil, and rosehip oil, and things like that - those oils are very unstable, they have double bonds in them and you put them in these products*



*and they will degrade, they will oxidise and form free radicals, affecting the whole stability of the product and also eventually causing damage to your skin as well.*

He then discussed how little consumers know about the ingredients in cosmetic products. He believes that they should ask more questions.

*They don't [know about the adverse effects of cosmetics products]. They buy a product, you know, they hear that rosehip oil is fabulous for scars, which it is, and then buy creams that have got rosehip oil in them. Now the cream doesn't say how much rosehip oil it has got in it. I wouldn't use rosehip oil, and don't use rosehip oil, in our formulations because it's just too unstable. So, you know, people buy these things thinking they're going to get some therapeutic effect and they don't. So I think it's really important for consumers to start asking questions, and particularly about the feature ingredients that have led to their buying the product.*

Evans also says that it is very difficult for consumers to get answers from cosmetic companies because the only people consumers are allowed to talk to are those in the marketing department. According to Will, cosmetic companies never let consumers speak to their people in the lab as they're scared that they might give away a bit too much. He says that there is a large value added to turn-over ratio in the cosmetics industry as the amount that the consumer pays relative to what companies spend on what goes in the jar is huge.

### **5.2.2 Interviews with beauticians**

Interviews were also conducted with two beauticians in the Canberra city and metropolitan areas. One was conducted with Lisa, from *Cosmo*, which is located in Dickson. This interview was recorded. The other beautician was located in the city region and wished to remain anonymous. Her interview was not recorded.

I asked Lisa: What influences consumers to buy one cosmetic product instead of another? Like Will Evans, Lisa believes that the ingredients are an important point of selling. She did not mention brand, but included other factors not discussed by Will.

*I think when we go to sell a product, if you talk about the ingredients, the benefits of the ingredients, if your sales are up to scratch, bye bye to you really. Packaging as well, I think packaging makes a big deal. Price. And just sales skills. Caring, ringing them up, seeing how their skin was after a facial, if you gave them a facial. Back up service to a product.*

The second beautician believes that advertising is the biggest factor and, like Lisa, agreed that packaging is important. According to her, people like pretty things, for example gold trimming on the packet.

I asked Lisa, why it is necessary to have complex words like 'retin A', 'alpha hydroxyl acids' and 'antioxidants' written on products and in advertising material. Lisa believes that it is necessary to have ingredients listed because clients need to know exactly what they are putting on their face:

*Especially, with example retin A, its quite damaging if you don't use it correctly, so, they need to know what they're putting on their face and what benefit it will have on their skin.*

Lisa also believes that explaining these words to customers helps to sell products.

*I find that a lot of people don't know what retin A is for - and that's where beauty therapists come into it because we have to explain what it is and the benefits. But I think it's impressive when you read it. I mean it sounds really good, doesn't it, all these big words? - but that's where we come into our selling technique, to sell a product, and it's a good sales pitch too. Because*



*they say what is retin A, and then you go into what it does, how it is going to benefit their skin, and how to use the product.*

The second beautician said that it is necessary to have ingredients written on the product or in advertising material so people know what is contained in the product. According to her, people know what the more basic products are, like retin A and Alpha Hydroxyl Acids, and what they do. They may not, however, know how the ingredients work. For example people know that retin A is good for scars, but may not know that it also weakens the skin. The beautician can explain these ingredients and provide more information.

When I asked Lisa whether consumers know what these long words mean, like Will Evans, she said that consumers do not know.

*No. A lot of them don't. No, definitely not.*

According to the second beautician, people know what some of the ingredients do, but not necessarily the mechanisms by which they do it.

The beauticians were then asked what approach they used to sell more products to consumers.

Lisa, from Cosmo, targets customers while they are having a facial.

*When I am doing a facial, I take them through each step, each cream I use. I tell them maybe two ingredients in a product, and the benefits it will have on their skin. And then when they leave, I give them two samples of a cleanser and a moisturiser and that way they can take it away and see how it feels. And usually too, when they come out of the cubicle I set the creams up here and just say today this is what I used on you, and focus on one product, rather than selling all the products. So I look at what they need most, which usually is a moisturiser, and I recommend that one.*

The second beautician also explains the product and the effects that it will have on the skin while doing a facial. She said it is not necessary to explain, in depth, how the product does something, but thinks that it is more important to explain how it can benefit the skin.

A more general question was asked about how the company they worked for researched what consumers might be attracted to when buying a product. Both beauticians had difficulty answering this question.

*Lisa. Um....don't know that question.*

*Mad. Market research?*

*Lisa. You mean advertising? Like, what we've done in the way of advertising?*

*Mad. That could be part of it, but consumer research as well.*

*Lisa. No. I haven't really done anything.*

The second interviewee said that all of their products are of one brand, *Ella Bache*, and are imported from France. When the products arrive in Australia they are adapted for the Australian conditions. They are, for example, modified for sun protection to suit the Australian climate.

Finally the beauticians were asked if they thought consumers believed in anti-wrinkle creams. According to Lisa:

*Yes and no (laugh). It depends what age group. I think most people are concerned about it, but I'd say from 20 to about 40, yes, and from 40 plus, no. I find the younger ones want to prevent it, but then, mature age women that have got lines - I mean once you've got them you can't get rid of them. You can slow down the aging progress, definitely. But then it doesn't just boil down to products, it's, you know, diet.*



The other beautician agreed and said that the creams can slow the aging process, but can't get rid of existing lines.

#### 5.2.4 Interview with a behind the counter seller

The behind the counter seller, in contrast to the beauticians, works in a department store selling products of different brands. She did not want the interview to be recorded. Primary responses to questions were hand written by the interviewee. Further questions were asked, based on her hand written responses, and further notes were made.

She was asked: What influences consumers to buy one cosmetic product instead of another? Like one of the beauticians, this interviewee considered advertising to be the most important factor. She said that advertising occurs on television, in books and in brochures. School children, she believes, are brainwashed by advertising. Two weeks before a particular product appears in the shops children come in wanting it because they have seen a celebrity using it in an advertisement. For example Madonna is seen advertising products by *Max Factor*. What they don't realise, she said, is that Madonna owns the company now.

This behind the counter seller has observed that for some, especially those who are older, the more you pay the better. These consumers believe that if a product costs more it must be good. The money that makes the product cost more is, however, spent on advertising and not on the product itself.

She was then asked why it was necessary to have words like 'retin A', 'alpha hydroxyl acids' and 'antioxidants', written on the product or in advertising material. She stated that the ingredients are placed on products to justify costs.

*To try to convey to the users the technical side of the product. Because of the cost of most items, they feel that they have to justify, ie research etc. The*



*younger generation will not accept that the manufacturer says his product is the best available at the moment: they want proof.*

The behind the counter seller was asked if she thought that consumers know what these long words mean. Like the other interviewees she believes that most consumers generally do not know. According to her younger people are more knowledgeable because they study science. They know, for example, that retin A is good for acne. Older people don't know what these words mean. She said that in the old days people were told to do something and they did it without questioning it. Now they don't do that and we have learned to question things.

The next question requested information about what approach she used to sell products to consumers. Like the beauticians she focuses on the interests of consumers who come into her shop.

*If they show a particular product much attention, I then follow through and explain if required.*

She suggests that you can "marry" products, that is you don't only have to use one brand of product.

The behind the counter seller was then asked how the company she works for researched what consumers might be attracted to when buying a product. Like the beauticians she had difficulty answering this question. She said that the dollar that is earned from selling is a good indicator of what consumers might be attracted to when buying a product.

Finally she was asked if she thought that consumers believed in anti-wrinkle creams.

*Truthfully no, but we all want good mileage, so any preventative measures make us feel good.*

Interviewees agreed that most people believe in anti-aging creams. She says that the earlier you start with these creams the better. They can do something for older people, for example the interviewee has seen women in their 60's and 80's, and they have reported some improvement after using the creams. The creams will not get rid of lines, the grooving will still be there, but it will not be as deep. Preventative measures are very important, for example eating well and drinking plenty of water.

This view was also shared by the beauticians who, like the behind the counter seller, emphasised the importance of preventative measures and the benefits of starting earlier with the creams, rather than later.

#### *5.2.4 Summary of retailers' responses*

The most important points which arose from these interviews were that, according to the retailers, consumers are influenced by factors like the ingredients, brand, price, sales tactics used by sellers and advertising when choosing to buy cosmetic products.

All four interviewees implied in one way or another that jargon words are placed on cosmetic products and in advertising material to sell the product. They also agreed that consumers do not know the meaning of jargon words.

The interviewees said that they use many tactics to sell products. These include focusing on a target audience, explaining products to consumers as they use them and handing out samples and displaying products as the consumer leaves.

Three out of the four interviewees had difficulty describing how the company they worked for researched what consumers looked for when buying cosmetic products. Price was believed by one to be a good indicator.



Interviewees agreed that most people believe in anti-aging creams. One said that they must believe in them because they keep buying them and another said that the younger ones believe in them but the older ones do not. Three out of four retailers pointed out that preventative measures, like diet and exercise, are important and that once you have lines it is very difficult to get rid of them.

### **5.3 Interviews with a science writer/broadcaster and a private consultant**

The two interviews discussed below were conducted with an ex-scientist, who is currently a science writer/broadcaster for the ABC, and a private consultant who works for InterAlia Development and Research Enterprises. The questions were asked in response to comments made in their publications and were also framed in light of the replies to consumer surveys. These interviews were conducted using email.

In her interview Bernadette Hobbs, science writer/broadcaster, states that the cosmetics industry uses many tactics to sell cosmetic products.

*Pretty well any tactics they can get their hands on. The classic/generic "new", "younger", "you", as well as the scientifically endorsed "clinical tests", "Swiss method", "scientific tests show".*

When asked if she thought some tactics were more important than others when selling cosmetic products she said:

*Scientific endorsement weighs heavily. New terms (alpha hydroxyl acids etc.) sound like cure-alls, especially when they're taken up and used uniformly by the industry - it gives more cred.*

Hobbs was then asked to comment on science jargon in advertising.



*By adopting scientific jargon (esp. in broad-delivery media like morning TV infomercials) and "explaining" it (whether correctly or not) with the right props (white coat, serious expression), they easily sell the idea that this thing has been trialed and works. Thing is, people don't really care whether or not it has been tested - as long as it works, or even might work a bit, it's worth a try.*

The second interview was conducted with a private consultant, Dr Anne Ring. She says that imagery and persuasive text is used to promote cosmetic surgery in magazines.

*By persuasive I am referring to text that included various tactics to put the topic in a positive light. These tactics may involve, singly or in some combination, aspects of structure, layout, terminology, informants and content. Among the tactics used, again singly or in some combination, in these new magazines were:*

- a skewed perspective that gives an incomplete or unbalanced view of cosmetic surgery in general and in the case of specific procedures, by playing down, glossing over or omitting the negative aspects (NB that this is not to say that there is no reference to the negatives in the magazines as a whole, but that they are marginalised, have lower visual profile, may be sanitised, may not feature in specific articles, etc).*
- highlighting the benefits and stressing successful outcomes.*
- the use of (mostly medical) experts who present information, through interviews or their own written contributions, in a confident and authoritative way, and...*
- the supplementary use of enthusiastic clients narrating their very positive experiences...*
- Also, in some cases in one of the magazines, by juxtaposing on the same or facing pages both a feature about and an ad promoting the same expert, which reinforce messages about that person through a tactic that has a de facto advertorial impact.*

*...there are persuasive elements in juxtaposing medically supported text with ideal body imagery to project the message of the problem-solving capabilities of cosmetic surgery.*

Dr Ring says that, depending on one's point of view, such tactics could be described as leading, or misleading.

When asked to comment specifically on science jargon in magazines she said:

*Probably, the pseudo-scientific jargon is used more for the conventional range of cosmetic and body care products found in the general women's magazines. And it was certainly very prominent in some of the delightful advertisements for some of the wilder 'medical' treatments for all sorts of things up until the 70s or so.*

*Currently, however, in the era of the informed consumer, the promoters of medical and allied products and services would be more likely to use actual scientific and medical terminology to provide that 'air of authority' and credibility, to which you refer. And this is certainly the case in the cosmetic surgery magazines that I have analysed.*

When asked how this jargon influences consumers to opt for cosmetic surgery she said:

*This is a good question, and not one that I have any firm answers for at this stage. It could, however, be speculated that the promotional tactics are evaluated through market research, and that their usage, with all of the costs involved in promotion, would be unlikely to be continued if they were not deemed to be working/meeting their needs/influential and, most importantly, profitable.*



She also states that:

*The Cosmetic Surgery Report (of the 1999 Inquiry into Cosmetic Surgery, organised by the NSW Health Care Complaints Commission, which is also the publisher of this report) includes a summary of a consumer survey which asked about the sources of information about cosmetic surgery, and found that the media (stories + ads) were the most frequently reported source of information (35.6% - on page 44 of the report).*

When asked about a “new wave” of magazines and how this new way of using persuasive text differs from the old way, she said:

*The new wave that I referred to was in regard to the use of the popular magazine format and marketing strategies to promote, or disseminate information about (depending on how one looks at it) , a form of medical practice. The timing of this new wave which, in mid-1998, involved four separate publications, coincided with a particular stage in the progressive deregulation of advertising by doctors that has been occurring over the past few years throughout Australia.*

According to Ring, the deregulation frees doctors to use the same sorts of persuasive marketing tactics that are already being used by other advertisers.

*So, while it is new for doctors, it is part of the same old thing that the community has been exposed to with accepted advertising practice. What is new is that now doctors who practice cosmetic surgery can use their authoritative and trust-me-I’m-a-doctor persona + the associated scientifically authentic language to promote their message to consumers. In this transitional phase of the doctor as both a highly influential figure and a potentially more commercial entity, this could be regarded as a more potently persuasive brew than any use of scientific and pseudo-scientific jargon by their more traditional associates in the cosmetics industry. And there is, of*

*course, the very powerful fact that medical technology can, in fact, produce some of the real changes that more conventional body lotions and potions can only promise.*

## 6.1 Overview

Dr Ring thus indicates that scientific jargon has a greater impact if it comes from a source that is believed to be more reputable.

The interviews with the science writer/broadcaster and the private consultant support statements made by the retailers in that they suggest that sellers in the cosmetics industry use many tactics to sell products, jargon being only one of them.

Bernadette Hobbs, the science writer/broadcaster, said that scientific endorsements are important compared to other sales techniques. The private consultant, Dr Anne Ring, said that scientific jargon has greater impact if it is used by a highly influential figure like a doctor.

Final conclusions will be dealt with in chapter six.

## 6.2 Science jargon and the purchase of anti-wrinkle skin creams

This study shows that science jargon used in advertisements for anti-wrinkle skin creams has a slightly positive effect on buying behaviour. A majority of subjects (55 per cent) said that they would prefer to buy the product advertised using jargon, compared to 45 per cent who said that they would prefer to buy the product advertised using no jargon. The finding supports previous suggestions that science jargon in advertising can encourage consumers to purchase products (Harris, 1963).

According to Hogge (1977) external products, those which a consumer does not ingest, for example cleaning agents and shampoo, are not easily sold using jargon. Internal products, those which a consumer ingests, are more



## Chapter 6: Discussion

### 6.1 Overview

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role that science jargon plays in advertising cosmetic products, in particular anti-wrinkle skin cream. The study addresses three research questions:

1. Does science jargon in advertising material encourage consumers to purchase anti-wrinkle skin creams?
2. Are consumers influenced by the jargon words because they are impressed/unimpressed with the way the words sound or because they have a good knowledge of whether the ingredients, described using the jargon words, work?
3. Do retailers use jargon to sell cosmetic products and are they informed about consumers' knowledge of the jargon words?

### 6.2 Science jargon and the purchase of anti-wrinkle skin creams

This study shows that science jargon used in advertisements for anti-wrinkle skin cream has a slightly positive effect on buying behaviour. A majority of subjects (60 percent) said that they would prefer to buy the product advertised using jargon, compared to 40 percent who said that they would prefer to buy the product advertised using no jargon. This finding supports previous suggestions that science jargon in advertising can encourage consumers to purchase products (Harris, 1983).

According to Hogge (1997) external products, those which a consumer does not ingest, for example cleaning agents and shampoo, are not easily sold using jargon. Internal products, those which a consumer ingests, are more

easily sold using jargon. Consumers purchasing the internal products tend to pay more attention to science and scientific procedures described on the packaging because they perceive such a product to have a direct effect on their health and well being (Hogge, 1997). Anti-wrinkle skin creams possibly fall into the category of internal products as, although they are not ingested like internal products, they are absorbed into the skin and, as far as the consumer believes, they have a direct effect on health and well being.

In the current study consumers quite often made their choice between the advertisements on the basis of their knowledge of the jargon words. This will be discussed in section 6.3 below.

The majority of subjects in this study agreed that the advertisement not containing jargon was more understandable compared to the one containing jargon. This is in agreement with Nogrady (1998) who showed that subjects rate a short scientific article as being more understandable if it contains less jargon.

In the current study no obvious trends were found in the way subjects of different age, occupation and education level responded to the advertisements. No particular group appeared to be any more knowledgeable of the jargon words compared to any other.

### **6.3 Consumer knowledge of jargon words**

Of the subjects who mentioned the jargon words as their reason for selecting a particular advertisement, more than half (65 percent) selected it on the basis of what they claim to be their knowledge of what the jargon words mean and/or their willingness to enquire. Subjects for example indicated that they would buy the anti-wrinkle skin cream advertised using jargon because the description is more scientific, gives them more opportunity to research ingredients listed and so they can look for ingredients that cause allergies and side effects. Those who indicated that they would buy the



cream advertised without the jargon said that they knew that some of the ingredients listed in the other advertisement were bad for you. Past studies, for example Atkinson and Carskaddon, 1975; Harris, 1983 and Nogrady, 1998, did not investigate consumers' knowledge of jargon words or their willingness to research. Hogge (1997) does, however, suggest that consumers are not easily persuaded or fooled by scientific claims and endorsements on the packaging of products for sale.

#### **6.4 Retailers' knowledge of consumer behaviour and the importance of science jargon as a sales technique in the cosmetics industry.**

This study shows that there is a discrepancy with regard to what consumers know about jargon words on anti-wrinkle skin creams and what retailers think they know. More than half of the subjects surveyed who mentioned the jargon words as their reason for selecting a particular advertisement, indicated that they knew what the words mean and/or were willing to research. In contrast to this all of the retailers said initially that most consumers do not know what the jargon words mean. After concluding that they don't, however, some changed their stance slightly by saying that some consumers know what some of the ingredients do but not necessarily the mechanisms by which they do it or that younger consumers tend to know more about what the words mean because they study science.

Another discrepancy in understanding relates to whether consumers believe in anti-wrinkle creams. All of the retailers stated initially in their interviews that consumers believed in anti-wrinkle creams. This contrasts with 30 percent of consumers surveyed who offered voluntarily that they did not. There was a degree of uncertainty in retailers' minds as they made comments indicating that consumers must believe in the creams because they keep buying them, or that maybe the younger ones believe in them but the older ones don't.



These discrepancies about consumers' understanding of the jargon words and their belief in the anti-wrinkle creams indicate that retailers are not in touch with what consumers claim to know about the products they are buying. Retailers are assuming that consumers are not knowledgeable about the jargon words, whereas many consumers are using these as a tool to investigate how the products are supposed to work. In the process of doing this many of the consumers are, in their own opinion, becoming more knowledgeable. The majority of subjects, regardless of their claimed level of understanding, still thought the article containing no jargon was more understandable compared to the one containing jargon. Retailers also fail to see how cynical consumers are about anti-aging creams.

There also seems to be some uncertainty on behalf of the retailers regarding consumer thought processes. At first retailers all agreed that consumers do not know what the jargon words mean or do not believe in anti-wrinkle creams, but later in the discussion they 'softened' their stance to point out specific groups who might be more knowledgeable or who do not believe in the creams.

Like the retailers, the science writer/broadcaster and the private consultant in the cosmetics industry both agreed in their interviews that science jargon can be used to make a product appear more credible and encourage consumers to buy cosmetic products. The science writer/broadcaster also said that people are willing to give any product a try regardless of whether it has been tested. Both of the interviewees agreed that jargon was more effective as a sales technique if it was "paired with the right props", for example a white lab coat and a serious expression or an influential figure such as a Doctor. This shows that those working in fields related to the cosmetics industry were, like the retailers, found to over estimate consumers' tendencies to be 'fooled' by science jargon.

There is no evidence in the literature which shows that a cream can operate in the dermis (Australian Consumers Association, 1990). Maybe consumers

are more aware of this than retailers, the science writer/broadcaster and the private consultant give them credit for. According to Wolf (1990) the cosmetics industry engages in clever marketing to exploit and profit from women's insecurities about their appearance. Perhaps consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the manipulation of the cosmetic industry.

Jargon may also be used because cosmetic companies are unfamiliar with what consumers look for when purchasing cosmetic products, assuming that consumers are impressed with the jargon when in fact many are not. The retailers who were interviewed in this study all agreed that the jargon words, written on the product or the advertising material, are used in some way to sell a product. Cosmetic companies may also be focusing on a small subgroup who are impressed with the jargon and may use different selling strategies to capture other groups of buyers.

Another interesting observation is that retailers, in many cases, do not believe that their own products work. Three out of the four retailers interviewed pointed out that preventative measures, such as diet and exercise, are important to prevent aging. They suggest that the creams can slow, but not reverse or stop the aging process. One interviewee said that the anti-wrinkle creams are used to "make us feel good".

## **6.5 How the public responds to information**

Consumers selecting the product to purchase on the basis of the advertisement containing jargon may do so because they are impressed with the way the jargon words sound (peripheral route) or because they know that some of the ingredients, described using the jargon words, are good for the skin. Retin A, for example, is good for acne (central route). Consumers selecting the advertisement without jargon may do so because they are unimpressed with the way the jargon words in the other advertisement sound (peripheral route) or because they know that the ingredients,

described using the jargon words, are bad for you, for example retin A causes the skin to peel and is dangerous during pregnancy (central route).

The answers that consumers gave were also quite variable, even if they were taking the same “route” to persuasion. Two consumers taking the “central route” may both have knowledge of the jargon words used in the advertisements but the source, nature and processing of this knowledge could be quite variable. One subject selected advertisement one because they knew that the anti-oxidants mentioned in this advertisement are good for the skin, while another selected advertisement two because they knew that retin A mentioned in advertisement one causes the skin to peel and is dangerous during pregnancy. In this situation they both have knowledge and are able to process information centrally, but the content and the source of the knowledge was different and resulted in them choosing different advertisements. These findings support Irwin and Wynne (1996) who state that science is a diffuse collection of institutions and areas of specialised knowledge. Following from this they suggest that people interpret things differently depending on the knowledge that they have.

The results of this study thus indicate that the use of science jargon cannot be explained within the confines of the “elaboration likelihood model”. A consumer can select any one of the advertisements and still take either the “central” or the “peripheral” route to persuasion.

## **6.6 Implications of the findings in this study**

This study shows that many consumers claim to know and are willing to learn more about the science behind cosmetic products. Additional work, therefore, should be devoted towards making information more accessible and truthful for them. This suggests that the cosmetic companies need to become more aware of how consumers are responding to information. Retailers in this study erroneously assumed that consumers had little knowledge of science jargon. They were also uncertain about how much



consumers knew about cosmetic products. If cosmetic companies are aware that consumers are willing to learn they may facilitate this by making information more readily available to them.

It should also be made more difficult for cosmetic companies to mislead customers as many companies are experts at attracting consumers' attention while just falling short of misrepresenting the facts (Australian Consumers Association, 1990). The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) should be stricter with the claims that the cosmetic companies are allowed to make. Cosmetic claims are currently seen as being acceptable by the TGA as they suggest that changes are temporary and occur only on the skin's surface. Claims that are seen to be satisfactory are outlined in the Cosmetics Claims Guidelines, which is a document providing guidance for companies regarding what are acceptable cosmetic and therapeutic claims. Acceptable cosmetic claims include, "helps prevent (reduce, slow) the signs (appearance) of aging (age lines, premature aging)", "smooths wrinkles" and "makes you feel or look younger" (L. Punyer, Pers. Comm., April 6, 2000). These claims, although considered acceptable, are still misleading for some consumers.

More effort should be directed towards keeping cosmetics companies honest. One of the retailers interviewed, Will Evans, director of the Purist Company, for example, states that it is often difficult to get answers from cosmetics companies because consumers are unable to contact the scientific experts in the lab, but instead are only allowed to converse with those in the marketing department.

The TGA specifies that labels on cosmetic products are required to have full ingredient listings (Australian Consumers Association, 1990). It is possible that jargon may be placed on cosmetic products, not to sell, but as a kind of shorthand for labelling, as one can seldom substitute a familiar word for an unfamiliar scientific term (Wilkinson, 1992). If jargon was not used the explanation on the product or in the advertising material would be too long.

Will Evans says, however, that people need to be made aware of ingredient disclosure regulations which state that companies have to specify ingredients in order of decreasing amount, without having to indicate the quantity of each ingredient. Below one percent they can put ingredients in any order. In this way one product could have ten times the value of some ingredients than another but still be labelled similarly. According to Will Evans some of these regulations need to be changed to make them clearer for consumers. This honesty is particularly important when it is considered that many retailers are knowledgeable of the fact that their anti-wrinkle creams do not work.

## **6.7 Recommendations for future study**

To more thoroughly investigate the effects of science jargon in advertising, the two advertisements should be made more similar, except for the jargon words, without giving away the purpose of the experiment. More than two advertisements, perhaps three or four, could be used ranging from no jargon to very jargon laden. Subjects would be required to rate the articles in order from the one advertising the cream that they would most like to buy to the one that they would least like to buy. By doing this a more complete picture will be obtained about the way consumers are influenced by jargon in advertising material. Surveys could also look more closely at how select groups differing in age, occupation, education level and residential location (suburb or city) respond to jargon. This would mean having a larger sample size.

A question may be added which asks subjects to rate what is most important for them when buying an anti-wrinkle skin cream. This would include factors such as advertising, jargon, fragrance, packaging and so on. In this way groups of consumers who respond optimally to different selling strategies could be observed.

Focus groups with consumers, beauticians and behind the counter sellers could discuss the discrepancy with regard to what the consumers look for when buying cosmetic products and what sellers think they look for. Issues discussed may include whether the consumer believes in anti-wrinkle creams and how knowledgeable consumers are with regard to the jargon words.

More studies should be conducted to investigate how science jargon in advertising affects consumer behaviour with respect to other products including cosmetics, food products and kitchen and outdoor appliances to name just a few.

Although consumers claim to have knowledge of the jargon words, no attempt was made to quiz them about what they actually know. Consumers are possibly parroting or repeating verbatim what they have read in advertising material, books and so on, without processing and really understanding what they have read. These issues could also be looked at more closely in focus groups.

## **6.8 Limitations**

This study was limited because the sample sizes for the surveys and the interviews were small. The samples and interviews were also only carried out at one point in time and in one location. Only two sample advertisements were used in the surveys and it was assumed for the purpose of the study that they represented a whole range of current advertisements for anti-wrinkle skin creams.

The sample advertisements contained differences, apart from the number of jargon words. These were initially put in place to disguise the purpose of the experiment and were not intended to influence subjects' choices. Order effects were not investigated. Subjects may have chosen either the



advertisement they read first or the one that is most recent in their mind, being the one read last.

## **6.9 Inconsistencies in advertising**

When conducting the interviews a number of inconsistencies were found to exist with regard to the way cosmetic products were manufactured and advertised. A summary of interviewees' statements is below.

### **6.9.1 Marketing of cosmetic products**

1. The herbal ingredients contained in cosmetic products, such as aloe and rosemary, are used principally to sell products. These ingredients, however, are present in such tiny amounts that they do not have any desired therapeutic effect. The reason for the tiny quantities is because of their high cost. The value added to turn over ratio (the amount the consumer pays relative to the value that goes in the bottle) in the cosmetics industry is huge because cosmetic companies do not spend very much money on their ingredients.

Cosmetic companies are reluctant say how much of a valuable ingredient is in a product. They will give other information, for example that "it is registered by the Swiss Vitamin Institute". This increases the buyers' sense of its safety and value but avoids an actual figure.

2. Cosmetic companies look for new ingredients so they can patent them, and then sell their products as "unique". Many ideal ingredients are not used because they are readily available to anyone.

### **6.9.2 Labelling of cosmetic products**

3. Ingredients in cosmetic products legally have to be listed in descending order of amount until the one percent level is reached. Below the one percent level they can be placed in any order. The consumer, however, does not know where in the list the one percent level is. Two products can be

identically labelled with everything in the same order and the amount of some ingredients in one could be 10 times the amount of the same ingredients in the other. This makes it difficult for a consumer to determine the quality of the product.

4. Cosmetic products often contain herbal extracts. These can be 1:1 extracts, 1:5 extracts, 1:10 extracts and so on. Extracts can be very dilute, as in the case of floral water. The way in which they are labelled is according to the weight of the extract, including both the water and the herb. This may mean that a herb is shown to be on top of the list when really it should be further down.

### 6.9.3 *Manufacturing of cosmetic products*

5. Instruments which researchers for cosmetic companies use to measure things, such as the elasticity of the skin or an increase in the strength of the hair, are finely tuned. Minuscule changes can therefore be observed. These changes are advertised as improvements on the results of trials even if they are small and only present in a limited number of people. They are advertised with statements such as, “up to a 75 percent increase”, when all this may mean is that one person in the trial demonstrated this.

6. The amount of an ingredient which is in a product is not the only important factor to consider when manufacturing cosmetic products. The vehicle in which it is present is also important. Putting a pro-vitamin, which is meant to be soothing and healing, in a shampoo, for example, is a waste. The reason for this is because a shampoo is meant to remove things from the hair and is not in touch with the hair for long periods of time. The hair therefore does not benefit from the pro-vitamin. Some cosmetic companies still place ingredients in a vehicle which is inappropriate for that ingredients' mode of action.

7. Some cosmetic products contain harmful ingredients. One of these is called propylene glycol, which is a mild irritant. It is used because it is a



penetration enhancer, enabling other ingredients to penetrate much more rapidly and deeply into the skin. This can be harmful if there are preservatives, colours and synthetic fragrances in the formulations. Some ingredients in cosmetic products, like vitamin C and oils, including rosehip oil, are also very unstable. These products will not only degrade, so that there is a lesser amount of them, but they will also oxidise and form free radicals. Many consumers are unaware of this.

## 6.9 Conclusion

This study shows that subjects, in their own opinion, are more knowledgeable than expected with regard to jargon used when advertising anti-wrinkle skin creams. Of subjects who mentioned jargon words as their reason for selecting a particular advertisement, more than half selected it on the basis of what they claim to be their knowledge of what the jargon words mean and/or their willingness to enquire. Retailers assumed that they had little knowledge. There is also a discrepancy regarding what consumers claim to know about jargon words and what retailers think they know. All of the retailers also thought that consumers believed in anti-aging creams while many consumers offered voluntarily that they did not. There was, however, a degree of uncertainty on behalf of the retailers with regard to what the consumers know or believe. In some cases retailers failed to believe in their own products.

These results indicate that consumers already know how cosmetic companies are affecting their intention to buy and consumers are willing to research. The next step therefore would be to make unbiased, truthful information more readily available for them to read. It should also be made more difficult for cosmetic companies to “stretch the truth”, by using vague cosmetic claims like, “helps prevent wrinkles” or “minimises fine lines”. This could be achieved by changing the regulations which govern the sale and marketing of cosmetic products.



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# Appendix I: Sample advertisements for anti-wrinkle skin cream

## Nutritious

### Bio-Protein Moisture Complex

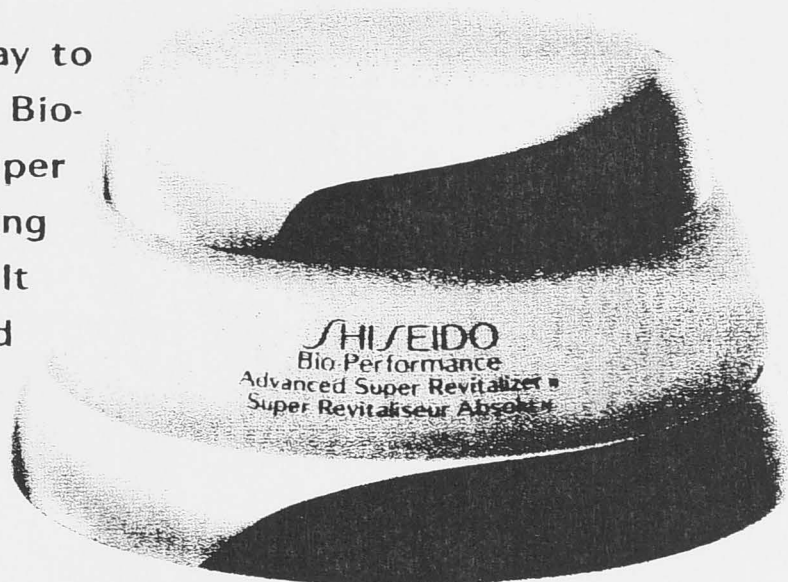
- Promotes elasticity – skin feels firmer, reducing the appearance of lines and wrinkles with an exclusive Milk-Derived Complex (whey protein and peptides) plus encapsulated Vitamin A and Pro Vitamin B<sub>5</sub>.
- Skin feels softer, looks smoother, positively glows. Milk Lipids and Ceramides moisturise and enhance skin's own moisture barrier.
- Helps protect against environmental elements. Contains anti-oxidants, Vitamin C and E.
- For Combination Skintypes.

## 1. Estee Lauder advertisement

### Bio-Performance

#### Advanced Super Revitalizer (Cream) N

**S**hiseido invents a new way to revitalize skin's appearance. Bio-Performance Advanced Super Revitalizer N works by encouraging your skin to look years younger. It is the world's most advanced skincare thinking and the world's simplest and most effective skincare regime.



### creating vibrance. optimizing beauty

A luxurious, highly concentrated moisturizer that combats the effects of an aggressive environment, rehydrating and strengthening the skin to visibly reduce fine lines, roughness, dryness and other signs of premature ageing.

Shiseido's breakthrough skin retexturing ingredient L-Arginine and the superior moisturizing benefits of Super Bio-Hyaluronic Complex provide a real solution to rough, dry skin.

## 2. Shiseido advertisement

FACE LIFT™

Serum C®

High Potency Vitamin C  
+ Gentle Prima Hydroxy Acids

Clinically proven to reduce the appearance of wrinkles and smooth fine lines. Serum C is a clear, stimulating citrus scented serum which is easily absorbed. FACE LIFT Serum C contains stabilised high potency Vitamin C. FACE LIFT Serum C moisturises and helps to minimise appearance of visible signs of ageing of the skin. This powerful anti-oxidant works with gentle Prima Hydroxy acids to visibly diminish the appearance of wrinkles, brighten skin, smooth fine lines and promote a youthful appearance.

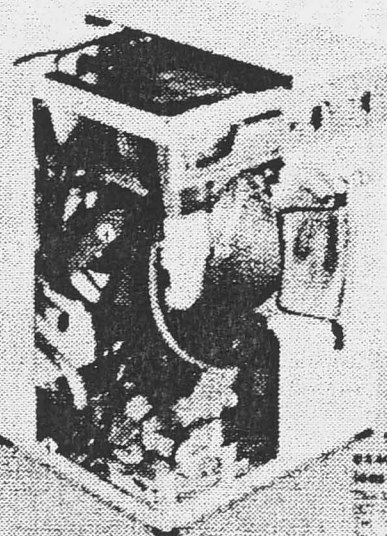
### 3. University Medical Advertisement



## Appendix II: Advertisements from Williamson (1983)

Miele.

## What's behind that pretty face?



For many years now, people have been buying Minn smelter machines for their speed, low cost and superb reputation. So we thought it was time you had an insight into the quality that lies behind that old-time motto.

[illegible]

There's also the programming behind it. There's different job segments describing the work. Some are seasonal contracts, and there's a specific work-scheduling process for where the crew is on call for scheduling of the water treatment plant.

पुनः विचार्य विनाशाय तत्परः  
 तदा पुनः तं वाङ्मनसं तत्र विनाश  
 कृतवान्।

Along the bank are single trees,  
but the distance I go through  
counting them will make me see the  
weight of a single tree alone  
thinks I've seen the end of it.

The above information was  
conveyed to the fact that we had a  
meeting through the [redacted] [redacted]  
[redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]  
[redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

We've given you just a few examples of the evidence to date that prove there is a real war about the sex. There are

The first thing I discovered  
was why we say that getting  
home from school is a strange feeling.  
The life - the old home house.  
It was a very long time ago.  
I was a child who was always  
in the middle of things.

There are two other things  
which I want to mention. One is the  
question of the future.

1990

1. *Chlorophyll*

1997

# Miele

**Miele**

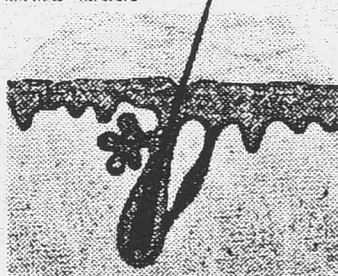
As the case is a common one

## 1. Washing machine advertisement

## A SERIOUS STEP FORWARD FROM TROPICAL MIST, MOUNTAIN DEW AND POWDERED ORANGE BLOSSOM.

The secret of beautiful, healthy skin has not  
in exotic sounding ingredients, or fancy bottles,  
but in scientifically developed and clinically  
tested preparations.

TO MAKE SKIN CARE THAT WORKS, YOU HAVE TO  
UNDERSTAND THE SKIN.



The skin is complex and very delicate.  
Vichy's preparations are conceived by dermatolo-  
gists who understand its complexities and made by  
pharmacists who use only the purest, proven ingre-  
dients to fulfill specific needs of a woman's skin.

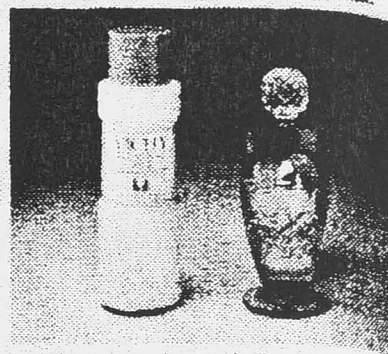
VICHY OFFER YOU FOUR RANGES BECAUSE THERE ARE  
FOUR BASIC SKIN TYPES.



There are four main skin types—oily, dry,  
normal and sensitive.

Only Vichy offer you a range of products  
corresponding to the particular requirements of  
all four types. With Vichy every woman can have  
the skin care that's exactly right for her. Cleansing  
milks, tonic lotions and moisturising creams for  
everyday use. And masks and night creams for  
special treatment.

YOU PAY FOR A PRETTIER YOU, NOT A PRETTIER PACK.



Some beauty packaging looks as though it  
has cost more than the product inside. When you  
buy Vichy, you pay for valuable ingredients, not  
an expensive pack.

VICHY IS MADE BY PHARMACISTS, SO IT'S SOLD IN  
PHARMACIES.

It's reasonable to assume that a pharmacist  
will know more about skin care than a grocer. And  
Vichy think you should always have the best advice.  
The pharmacist will give you the Vichy  
booklet and help you select the right range for your  
skin type.

NO SINGLE PRODUCT CAN REPLACE VICHY.

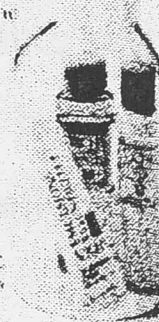
How can you expect one product to remove  
dirt and grime, and at the same time restore the  
natural balance of moisture and  
vitamins that healthy  
skin needs?

Vichy's preparations work  
in harmony. Each preparing the  
way for the next stage of the  
beauty routine.

Use Vichy every day  
and soon you'll feel and see  
the difference in your skin.

Nature gave you beauty.  
But only the science of  
dermopharmacy can help  
you keep it.

**VICHY SKIN CARE**  
dermopharmaceutical preparations



## 2. Advertisement for Vichy skin care products



## Appendix III: The first survey

### Survey about the purchase of hypothetical anti-wrinkle skin creams

A survey for the Australian National University and the Centre for the Public Awareness of Science

Read the following 2 advertisements for anti-wrinkle skin creams. Afterwards you will be requested to state which advertisement you prefer and why. You will also be asked which product you would tend to buy.

1.

#### *Youthful Look*

The “Youthful Look” skin cream presents a new way to revitalise the skin’s appearance. Its exclusive formula includes Retin A(tretinoin) and Alpha Hydroxyl Acids to chase away wrinkles and fine lines. Instantly anti-oxidants “mop” up free radicals, decreasing their aging effects and leaving you with dewy, more youthful looking skin. ‘Youthful Look’ is clinically proven to reduce the appearance of wrinkles up to 50% in only 2 weeks.

2.

#### *Rejuvenate Now*

“Rejuvenate Now” is the answer to new younger looking skin. Its unique formula contains substances that work by providing the skin with vitamins, plumping up the layers of the skin and sloughing off dead skin cells. Your skin will immediately possess new life and vitality. Clinical tests show that you will see up to a 50% reduction in wrinkles in only 2 weeks.



## Questions:

1. Which advertisement do you prefer?

1

2 TAFE or university is selected, what is your level of study (eg Masters) and

Why? (eg Engineering)?

Any other comments...

2. Based on the information provided in the 2 advertisements which product would you buy?

1

2

Why?

3. Which of the two advertisements is more understandable?

1

2

Why?

4. Personal details

a. Sex:

Male

Female

b. Broad age bracket:

20-25 26-30 31-35 36-40

41-45 45-50 Over 50

c. Occupation:

d. Education Level:

Secondary (year 10)

Secondary (year 12)

TAFE/Apprenticeship

University

If TAFE or university is selected, what is your level of study (eg Masters) and background (eg Engineering)?

Any other comments...

### Youthful Look 1.

The "Youthful Look" skin cream presents a new way to revitalise the skin's appearance. Its exclusive formula includes Retin A (retinoin), vitamin E and Alpha Hydroxy Acids to chase away wrinkles and fine lines. Instantly anti-oxidants " mop" up free radicals, decreasing their aging effects and leaving you with dewy, more youthful looking skin. "Youthful Look" is clinically proven to reduce the appearance of wrinkles up to 50% in only 2 weeks.

### Youthful Look 2.

"Youthful Look" is the answer to new younger looking skin. Its unique formula contains substances that work by providing the skin with essential nutrients which rejuvenate the layers of the skin. Dead skin cells are also removed and your skin will immediately possess new life and vitality. Clinical tests show that you will see up to a 50% reduction in wrinkles in only 2 weeks.

## Appendix IV: The second survey

### Survey about the purchase of hypothetical anti-wrinkle skin creams

A survey for the Australian National University and the Centre for the Public Awareness of Science

Read the following 2 advertisements for anti-wrinkle skin creams. Afterwards you will be asked which product you would tend to buy and why.

1.

#### *Youthful Look 1.*

The “Youthful Look” skin cream presents a new way to revitalise the skin’s appearance. Its exclusive formula includes Retin A(tretinoin), vitamin E and Alpha Hydroxyl Acids to chase away wrinkles and fine lines. Instantly anti-oxidants “mop” up free radicals, decreasing their aging effects and leaving you with dewy, more youthful looking skin. ‘Youthful Look’ is clinically proven to reduce the appearance of wrinkles up to 50% in only 2 weeks.

2.

#### *Youthful Look 2.*

“Youthful Look” is the answer to new younger looking skin. Its unique formula contains substances that work by providing the skin with essential nutrients which rejuvenate the layers of the skin. Dead skin cells are also removed and your skin will immediately possess new life and vitality. Clinical tests show that you will see up to a 50% reduction in wrinkles in only 2 weeks.



## Questions:

1. Based on the information provided in the 2 advertisements which product would you buy?

1

2

Why?

If they mention jargon words in their answer ask:

1b. Did you select **advertisement 1** because you were impressed with the way the words sound or because you know how the ingredients described using the words work?

1c. Did you select **advertisement 2** because you were unimpressed with the way the words in advertisement 1 sound or because you know how the ingredients described using the words work?

2. Which of the two advertisements is more understandable?

1

2

Why?

3. Personal details

a. Sex:

Male

Female

b. Broad age bracket:

20-25   26-30   31-35   36-40

41-45   45-50   Over 50

c. Occupation:

**d. Education Level:**

Secondary (year 10)

Secondary (year 12)

TAFE/Apprenticeship

University

If TAFE or university is selected what is your level of study (eg Masters) and background (eg Engineering).

Any other comments...

## Appendix V: Interview template

1. In your opinion what influences consumers to buy one cosmetic product instead of another?

2. On cosmetics bottles and in advertising material you will often come across complex words like 'retin A', 'Alpha Hydroxyl Acids' and 'antioxidants'.

Why, in your opinion, is it necessary to have these written on the product or in advertising material?

3. Do you think that consumers know what these long words mean?

4. The idea is to sell a product.

What approach do you use to sell more of your product to consumers?

5. How did the company that you work for research what consumers might be attracted to when buying a product?

6. Do you think that consumers believe in anti-aging creams?



## Appendix VI: Interview with Dr Anne Ring, Private Consultant, InterAlia Development and Research Enterprises.

You quoted in your article, *Sociologist unmasks illusion of cosmetic fads*, that "the new wave of magazines...uses misleading imagery and persuasive text to promote cosmetic surgery and surgeons"

Q. 1. In your view, what form does this persuasive text take and is it also misleading?

A.1a: By persuasive I am referring to text that included various tactics to put the topic in a positive light. These tactics may involve, singly or in some combination, aspects of structure, layout, terminology, informants and content. Among the tactics used, again singly or in some combination, in these new magazines were:

- \* a skewed perspective that gives an incomplete or unbalanced view of cosmetic surgery in general and in the case of specific procedures, by playing down, glossing over or omitting the negative aspects (NB that this is not to say that there is no reference to the negatives in the magazines as a whole, but that they are marginalised, have lower visual profile, may be sanitised, may not feature in specific articles, etc)

- \* highlighting the benefits and stressing successful outcomes, both through relative amount of textual content and/or through variations in layout (eg size, colour, boxing, etc re the main, take-home messages which, some research has shown - may be all that some readers actually read for some articles)

- \* the use of (mostly medical) experts who present information, through

interviews or their own written contributions, in a confident and authoritative way, and

\* the supplementary use of enthusiastic clients narrating their very positive experiences, which often include endorsement of the interviewed/author experts within whose articles the clients are featured as case studies

\*Also, in some cases in one of the magazines, by juxtaposing on the same or facing pages both a feature about and an ad promoting the same expert, which reinforce messages about that person through a tactic that has a de facto advertorial impact

\* And, as noted in an article I wrote for *The Australian Health Consumer* *The Marketing of Cosmetic Surgery: Doctors and the beauty trade*, No.2, 1999:20-22), and in an article by T. Spowart and C. Mastrantone in the same issue (on *The High Cost of Cosmetic Surgery*, pp 23-24), there are persuasive elements in juxtaposing medically supported text with ideal body imagery to project the message of the problem-solving capabilities of cosmetic surgery

A.1b: Depending on one's point of view, such tactics could be described as leading, or misleading.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Q.2. Do the new magazines use science jargon?**

A.2: This depends in part on what you mean by jargon. In your description, you refer to the complexity of the scientific terms and what they mean, but your examples are more in the area of pseudo-scientific jargon. And both of these types of jargon can certainly be found in advertisements for cosmetic services and products in popular magazines.

Probably, the pseudo-scientific jargon is used more for the conventional range of cosmetic and body care products found in the general women's magazines. And it was certainly very prominent in some of the delightful advertisements for some of the wilder 'medical', treatments for all sorts of things up until the 70s or so.

Currently, however, in the era of the informed consumer, the promoters of medical and allied products and services would be more likely to use actual scientific and medical terminology to provide that 'air of authority and credibility' to which you refer. And this is certainly the case in the cosmetic surgery magazines that I have analysed.

At the same time, however, there are interesting variations in the way that a medical practice like cosmetic surgery, for example, is presented, and this is the subject of an article I have recently written (with the working title of *Mass Mediating the New Face of Medical Practice: What we see and what we get in magazines about cosmetic surgery*). This is currently in press in the next issue of *Australian Studies in Journalism*, which is published by the Department of Journalism in the University of Queensland. In this article, I compare two magazines with very different approaches to the presentation of cosmetic surgery:

\* One of them uses a quasi-medical journal approach (tempered, to some practical degree, by features and ads about allied beauty products and services). It makes a strong feature of including invited contributions from a range of proceduralists, and its layout, language and illustrations show some mimicry of those journals.

\* The other, however, takes a much more glossy, visually appealing and Vogueish approach to its content, which is wholly based on interviews of experts by professional journalists.

The article should be published in the next few months, but, if you're



interested, I could find out if I can send you a confidential copy beforehand.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Q.3. How does this jargon (if present) influence consumers to opt for cosmetic surgery?**

A.3: This is a good question, and not one that I have any firm answers for at this stage. It could, however, be speculated that the promotional tactics are evaluated through market research, and that their usage, with all of the costs involved in promotion, would be unlikely to be continued if they were not deemed to be working/meeting their needs/influential and, most importantly, profitable. These are the sorts of issues that I recall coming across in readings that I did some years ago. At this stage, however, I have not carried out consumer research or a recent literature search in this area. A couple of points that might be of interest, though:

\* the Cosmetic Surgery Report (of the 1999 Inquiry into Cosmetic Surgery, organised by the NSW Health Care Complaints Commission, which is also the publisher of this report) includes a summary of a consumer survey which asked about the sources of information about cosmetic surgery, and found that the media (stories + ads) were the most frequently reported source of information (35.6% - on page 44 of the report).

\* Two de facto advertorials for the anti-ageing product Imedeen would be well worth looking at and comparing. They both occur in the Issue 6 of 'Cosmetic Surgery Magazine' (August-October 1999), which has a special men's supplement. And there is an Imedeen ad+feature combination for each of the two target groups, female and male. While the basic points for each group are the same, they are constructed very differently, and present very different main messages as a result. As part of this, there is a very different emphasis on the (scientific) means vs the (appearance) ends, in terms of the target audience! Highlighting the point that it may not only be

a case of what jargon is used, but also of how it is used, and how this could be related to varying stereotypes of specific target groups.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Q.4. You mention a "new wave" of magazines. How does this new way of using persuasive text differ from the old way?**

A.4: The new wave that I referred to was in regard to the use of the popular magazine format and marketing strategies to promote, or disseminate information about (depending on how one looks at it), a form of medical practice. The timing of this new wave which, in mid-1998, involved four separate publications, coincided with a particular stage in the progressive deregulation of advertising by doctors that has been occurring over the past few years throughout Australia (and which I've described in both of my two articles that I've referred to earlier in this response).

Essentially, then, the deregulation frees doctors to use the same sorts of persuasive marketing tactics that are already being used by other advertisers, so, while it is new for doctors, it is part of the same old thing that the community has been exposed to with accepted advertising practice. What is new is that now doctors who practice cosmetic surgery can use their authoritative and trust-me-I'm-a-doctor persona + the associated scientifically authentic language to promote their message to consumers. In this transitional phase of the doctor as both a highly influential figure and a potentially more commercial entity, this could be regarded as a more potently persuasive brew than any use of scientific and pseudo-scientific jargon by their more traditional associates in the cosmetics industry. And there is, of course, the very powerful fact that medical technology can, in fact, produce some of the real changes that more conventional body lotions and potions can only promise. (The question of whether the physical changes bring about, in their turn, the sorts of associated benefits that are hoped for is a separate issue.)

\*\*\*\*\*

**Q.5: Is there, in your opinion, an age/educational/occupational influence in the way that people are influenced by the text used in these magazines?**

A.5: As suggested in some of my earlier answers (qv the Imedeen ads, and my forthcoming article comparing the two styles of cosmetic surgery magazines), it would seem, rather, that the text in these magazines can be tailored and adapted to appeal to various types of markets.

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Anne Ring, Copyright 2000

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3. Do you think some tactics are more important than the others?

scientific endorsement weighs heavily. New terms (alpha-hydroxy acids etc.) sound like results, especially when they're taken up and used uniformly by the industry - it gives more cred.



## **Appendix VII: Interview with Bernadette Hobbs, science writer/broadcaster**

**1. Can you tell me a bit about your role as a scientist and a science writer/broadcaster?**

I'm no longer employed as a scientist - the perception of scientists is they have to be working in (or retired from) the lab. As a science writer/broadcaster my main thing is to present science for the intelligent but not necessarily scientifically literate young adult. My pieces are more along the commentary line, rather than straight journalism, so I get to get away with a bit. I also literally write for broadcasting - wherever possible my stuff has to go across both the net and radio, so each script has to work as a written piece as well.

**2. In your web article *Science @ Sale Time* you wrote: " the rest of us have succumbed daily to the greatest attractive force of all: advertising...the leader in this field is the cosmetics industry, where white coats and sciencey words relieve us of billions of dollars a year".**

yep!

**In your opinion what tactics does the cosmetics industry use to sell cosmetic products?**

pretty well any tactics they can get their hands on. The classic/generic "new", "younger", "you", as well as the scientifically endorsed "clinical tests", "Swiss method", "scientific tests show". It'd be interesting to see if the backlash against western medicine will be echoed in purchasing patterns - will women start buying creams that realign their auras???

**3. Do you think some tactics are more important than the others?**

scientific endorsement weighs heavily. New terms (alpha-hydroxy acids etc.) sound like cure-alls, especially when they're taken up and used uniformly by the industry - it gives more cred.

4. What role does science jargon, or other forms of misleading text, play in advertising products like anti-wrinkle skin cream?

See above.

5. In your web article *Close your eyes and think of Einstein* you wrote: "Of course talking science and understanding it are two different things. And who better to exploit a difference like that than our good friends in marketing".

How does this apply to the cosmetics industry? How do they exploit a difference like this?

See above - by adopting scientific jargon (esp in broad-delivery media like morning tv infomercials) and "explaining" it (whether correctly or not) with the right props (white coat, serious expression), they easily sell the idea that this thing has been trialed and works. Thing is, people don't really care whether or not it has been tested - as long as it works, or even might work a bit, it's worth a try.



## **Appendix VIII: Interview with Will Evans, the manager of the Purist company**

### **Question 1**

**Maddy (M).** In your opinion what influences consumers to buy one cosmetic product instead of another?

**Will (W).** ...I think consumers are most influenced by the feature ingredients in products. ...Branding is certainly important, but, you know, then if they're looking with-in a brand, I think it's the feature ingredient.

**M.** So people are quite knowledgeable of what's in the products and they will seek to explore these things?

**W.** I don't think they're, consumers have very little knowledge about the base of all cosmetic products. What sorts of functional ingredients are used in them, you know, sort of about emulsifiers and preservatives and, you know, different things like that, humectants and pH adjusters and so forth. I think they're, they have very little understanding or knowledge about those, and tend to be quite, often quite baffled with ingredient disclosures on products, and their eyes just alight onto things that they know, and those are generally the natural sounding ingredients, sort of herbs and you know protein and things like that, that they know of and that are generally used as a marketing handle by which the cosmetics companies sell the products.

The big thing though, as far as we're concerned, is that those feature ingredients are used in minuscule amounts. Very well known within the industry that those feature ingredients don't even need to be in the products to make them appear to work. You know in sort of conditioners and so forth which for instance, a hair conditioner which is supposed to de-tangle your hair and make it shiny and nourish your hair, all of them will de-tangle and make your hair shine because they've got a particular category of ingredient



which leaves a continuous film on your hair and that makes the light shine off and makes the comb go through easier. All conditioners have those ingredients in them, which generally tend to be synthetic, but the nourishing ingredients are the things that the people get sort of ongoing nutrition from. Something in a conditioner, and which are used then as a feature ingredients to sell them, are there in negligible concentrations and that is very well known with in the industry that they are sort of marketing tools only.

**M. So, why do other companies have these in such high concentrations? Like you were saying that you use smaller amounts of...**

**W.** We, we use higher concentrations, other companies use negligible amounts. It's the other way around.

**M. Oh, ok, ok. I'm sorry I misunderstood you.**

**W.** That's right. So, you know, things, things are marketed as though they, you know, they have got a lot of aloe in them, or rosemary in them, or lots of herbs in them, or what ever, but those things are generally there ineffectual, tiny amounts.

**M. Uh hm. So what your saying is your products work more effectively because you've put more of these products, more of these ingredients in your products.**

**W.** When we feature an ingredient we say how much is in there, a particular ingredient. We also only use ingredients which have a proven beneficial effect when applied externally-and we use them to concentration at which they will have that effect. It's a fairly tricky sort of industry, you know, one of the things, you know, people are really interested in natural products and herbs and herbal extracts and so forth and when you look at the brands of natural products on the market and you turn them over and look at the

ingredient listing, very commonly, in fact mostly, the herbal extracts are listed there at the top of the list-water and then you will have, you know, herbal extracts from this plant, that plant and the other plant.

Now, the way in which the ingredient disclosure regulations have been formulated, the way in which ingredients legally have to be listed is in descending order of amount until you get to one percent, below one percent you can shift then about however you like. But the consumer doesn't know where that one percent level is, so, as a company we have been making submissions to the regulatory bodies since 1993, since well, when the regulations came into force, saying that, you know, for instance you can get two products that are identically labelled disclosed with every thing in exactly the same order and the value of the ingredients in one could be ten times the value of the ingredients in the other. So our suggestion, and it hasn't been taken up yet, but if that one, that cut off point should be listed on labels so that at least consumers knew that if it was above the line that they were at least getting one percent of something.

**M. That's interesting, because I didn't know that either.**

**W.** Yes, so you know you can, very, very commonly you get, you know water and maybe glycerine and you know, you might get sort of two or three or four ingredients that are there at more than one percent, and, generally, most of the ingredients, and virtually all of the, the ingredients that are attractive to people are in the, you know, are further down the list. But often that one percent, you know, that can start pretty high up can seem as though there is some, you know, decent amount in there, but there is not. But with herbs, and with herbal ingredients, you get, you can buy extracts of herbs, one as to one extract or, one as to five extract or one as to ten extract, or you can make your own extract, but be very dilute, as say a floral water for instance.



But the, the amount, the way they are labelled disclosed is according to the weight of actual herb that's in there that, you know, not, not counting the water. But if you've got, you know, one percent as to one of the extract then you have got one percent there, but if you have got one percent of a one to five extract you have got point two of a percent. You have got a floral water, for instance, that might for instance have only, you know, as of a one to hundred extract, so you have got a sort of very dilute ingredient.

Companies claim that high up in the list, and they sort of add, add all the water in with it as well, where as legally it should be right down the bottom of the list. So you get all of these products on the market which, you know, turn around and have a wonderful list of herbs there, well it is very deceptive, because those herbs, in virtually all cases, should be listed right down the bottom.

So its not, you know we, and we, we disclose them as a company in the legal way, but it's not a level playing field out there. I think we're probably about the only ones out there who do, but it's very time consuming and, you know, making submissions to the trades practices commission and all these sorts of things. We have done a bit of that but, you know, the industry bodies, the industry associations, and the government regulatory bodies, you know, tend to, you know, be in each other's pockets really. It seems to, it seems to us, in, you know, making it sort of fairly easy for the industry and, you know, its more, often it is a bit of a cover up thing, you know, it's not people saying this is- it's what they don't say.

## Question 2

**M. Another question which is related to what we have already discussed is: On cosmetics bottles and in advertising material you will often come across complex words for example 'retin A', 'alpha hydroxyl acids' and 'antioxidants'.**

**W. Yep.**



**M. Why in your opinion is it necessary to have these written on the product or in advertising material?**

**W.** Well, it gets back to, you know it all gets back to cosmetics companies, like any business, are interested in making profits.

**M. Uh hm, Uh hm. Yes of course.**

**W.** But they make their money often on, you know, on, on these special sounding ingredients. Now they are continually, they have lots of activity in the patent area. So they're always looking for new ingredients, or new mixtures of ingredients, sort of, new forms of ingredients, sort of, new ways of presenting them so they've got some form of patent protection on that, so that they can then spend their marketing dollars on it and know that they have got it, you know, rather to themselves.

**M. And no body else can sort of...**

**W.** No one else can. And, and quite often they will get an ingredient and they give it their own name. So it might be sort of quite a, quite simple ingredient but they'll give it their own fancy name, then sort of market, that; but, so, that's what cosmetic companies do. There are a lot of really fantastic, natural ingredients sort of, commonly available ingredients that cosmetics companies tend not to use much, or feature much because any man, any body can use them, so that there is no particular advantage in it for them.

**M. So you think the products are actually, the ingredients are quite similar, but they've been given slightly different, or an extra syllable, or, something like that?**

**W.** Yes, and the other thing that happens is that the instruments are, by which you can measure the, you know, the elasticity of the skin, you know

moisturisation those, those sorts of things are incredibly fine these days. So, when they do their trials on things, you know, they're using an ingredient, so they often use some sort of an ingredient and think there is, you know, that consumers will be interested in that we can get, you know get some marketing, marketing advantage out of that. Then when they have a look at their sort of instrumental, you know, their results of their trials The improvements can be really minuscule, and only on, you know, a certain proportion of people, but, they are never the less there, so they, you know, so, so, things are marketed. And so they have really good results, but they're often presented, you know, up to 75% increase in the strength of your hair, or something like that, you know, but all that that means is that that, you know, one person in their trial, has demonstrated that. Consumers have to really be aware, you know, there's a lot of pseudo scientific mumbo jumbo out there.

### Question 3

**M. Do you think consumers know what these long words mean?**

W. Ah

**M. This is also related to what we've been...**

W. I don't. I think that the marketing arms of these companies are very strong. They've got lots of dollars for which to advertise and, you know, a big part of the reason for that is they spend very little on their, on their, their ingredients that go in the bottle. But, I don't think that consumers know very much, it is more things that are in vogue, and the cosmetic companies are the people who make them in vogue, you know vitamin C and things like that, you know, they, and these things often have a particular life as well. You know something will come in and be a fad for a while and then they will change over to something else, you know, or one company will change over to something else. It's just a continually sort of changing

feast of, of looking for new ingredients that will have a benefit for consumers.

But when it gets down to it, it's really marketing. There are two things. One is that often these ingredients only have a slight, give a slight improvement and you've got to be very careful how the cosmetic company presents that, you know. They also use very small amounts of these ingredients because they are very expensive. And their moisture creams will work any where, you know. Moisture creams work by leaving, you know, by leaving a barrier on you skin so that the moisture don't, can't come through, you know, and you can use a, a very simple, like, like Sorbolene for instance, cream as though, you know, as good as anything else. Well, in, in, in that way of working where you, you are putting a film on your skin and stopping the moisture from coming out, well all moisture creams will do that fairly similarly, you know. Then you're looking at what nourishing ingredients you have got in there, which actually penetrate the skin and which have a proven, you know, beneficial effect when applied on the skin externally. And those sorts of ingredients tend to be expensive, and they don't tend to be used in very decent concentration at all.

**M. To have any desired affect they just put a little bit in and claim, ok it has got this, therefore it nourishes your skin.**

W. Yeh.

**M. When really, you know, there's not enough to do the job.**

W. There is not enough to do the job and, you know, it will have a very small beneficial effect anyway. You know there are things like, you know, there's a hair care range on the market that bases its whole marketing, and always has, around a particular pro-vitamin.

**M. Uh hm.**



W. And, you know, the add campaign's got this little pro-vitamin rating around you, you know, getting absorbed through the hair and, you know, and getting absorbed through the scalp and so forth. Now, that ingredient is a fabulous ingredient. It is found in, you know, all cells of the body actually, it's very soothing and healing, and proven to be very soothing and healing. There is a pharmaceutical product on the market that features that particular ingredient. It is an expensive ingredient, its a kilo, but, when you ask how much is in there, you know, you'll, you'll never be told. You know, you'll never be told, its, its other things are said like it is registered by the *Swiss Vitamin Institute*, or things like that. But that doesn't mean anything. It's how much is in there. And not only how much is in there, but what is the vehicle in which it is in there.

If you are putting this particular pro-vitamin, and it's, its totally wasted, because the shampoo, you try to remove things from your hair. You're not, you know, they are in, in touch with your hair for a very short period of time, and they're in a vehicle which are trying to get rid of things, not deposit things. So it is totally wasted there any way. In products like conditioners and leave in hair products where it would have a beneficial effect, because it was left in for a longer period of time, there's just not enough. Even the guideline formulations you see around the place have got this ingredient listed at, you know, use it at, point one of a percent, well, I would say it is probably used by most companies at significantly less than that.

When you have a look at the amounts that you need to actually get reasonable activity, you need to use, sort of, you know, at least one percent, and better if you use, sort of, two or three percent. So, in the products where we use that ingredient, which is in most of our new face and body products, for instance, we do use it at one to three percent. So in the sensitive skin products, where, you know, because it is such a soothing and healing ingredient, we use it at three percent. Well, that's thirty times the level at

which, you know, most of the guideline formulations are, which is maximum most, most other companies would appear to put in. So, and that means that a hell of a lot, as far as the value of the raw, the value of what goes in the bottle.

If you look at what value the consumers are getting compared to what the costs, you know the costs of goods is, for what they are buying; you know, you look at any, any product, any cosmetic product for instance, and the consumer's buying the package, and there's, you know the direct costs of the packaging, the labour to make it, and the ingredients. That doesn't really matter who you are, much as soon as you, you know, are up into reasonable production numbers, the value, the cost of the packaging and the cost of labour are very similar. The only area where manufacturers can really save is, is on ingredients. And that's what they do. And the way in which they do that is by using sort of, you know, all use fairly similar sorts of base formulations, all of which will function quite effectively you know, shampoos, conditioners, moisturiser creams, the whole lot. But they don't put any, virtually, to all intensive purposes, they, they put virtually none of them in, of the really valuable ingredients which are going to provide the skin with, sort of, ongoing, nourishment and, and nutrition...

#### Question 4

**M. Speaking of selling, the idea is to sell the product. Um, what approach do you use to sell more of your products to consumers?**

**W. ...Well. Very, it's very difficult. You know, we're a small company. We have, you know, little capital behind us, so, its really, you know, its cost an incredible amount to advertise out in there the way that most cosmetic companies do. You know, you put a one page ad in *Cleo* or *Cosmo* or something and that will set you back about fifteen thousand dollars. So, with us its a fairly slow process, you know, we, you know, we have discovered that we, to spend our money efficiently, to have it, have it so that, you know, we get some benefits in the sales line, we've found that we**



need to target people who are very much out, our, our target market. People who are very discerning about what they use and sort of, you know, don't, you know, not, picking up, you know, it says the word natural on it or it says something, you know, that they don't, pick it up and because it's fairly inexpensive, and say I will have that one. Lots of people are looking for natural but I think probably only a, a fairly small proportion of them are sort of, looking more deeply into, you know, what it is that they are buying.

**M. Because natural could mean a lot of things. A lot of products that aren't good for you are actually naturally occurring.**

W. That is, that is very true. That is very true. You know, there, there are all sorts of issues. Another, you know, another one, one ingredient, which, which we don't use because it is a primary irritant-it is propylene glycol, which is, a humectant. So it is used instead of glycerine or sorbitol, attracting water to itself. And so it's sort of moisturising and that way it also, by attracting water to itself, helps to stop creams from drying out, for instance.

**M. Uh hm. I think you mentioned some of these products on your web site.**

W. We did, we do. Our information site, you know, goes into quite a lot of detail. Now, one of the things with that particular ingredient which has only fairly recently, in the last, sort of, you know, five or so years-it's a very powerful penetration enhancer, so, things that you would normally put on your skin, it makes them, some of them, it makes them penetrate much, much, more rapidly and deeply into the skin. Now, this is fine if you've got a really good, safe formulation. But if you've got, you know, preservatives, for instance, that are a bit nasty, and most of them are, and, you know, propylene glycol itself and various things, you know, colours and, you know, synthetic fragrances and so forth, you've got propylene glycol in there as well, and you suddenly find all the baddies as well start to get transported deep and into the skin.



### Question 5

**M. Uh hm, That's very interesting. How did your company research what consumers might be attracted to when buying a product. You talk about natural products and having higher concentrations.**

**W.** We do it that way. This business started out with my passion towards producing a complete range of personal care products, cosmetics and toiletries, which were, are genuinely natural, which were safe and which were highly effective. We sort of looked at it from that angle rather than what's going to be attractive to consumers, and probably that's an area where we, we have some-what lacked, you know, in marketing skills. And also because we, you know, we, don't do the same tricks that other companies do. We, you know, we started off on very strong moral ground, and we sort of retained that strong moral ground, and we stand up to very high scrutiny, and we hope that with, you know, products in the market place and with things like this and sort of, you know, getting publicity and so forth that, it will be sort of an education campaign. People will start to have a look more deeply into the products they use and start to, you know, question manufacturers of the product they use. You know vitamin E, for instance, people love vitamin E, but you know, when you have a look at how much vitamin E is in the cream that you're buying, you know, they won't tell you, you know, it won't say and it'll be, in virtually all instances, very small because it's a very expensive ingredient.

**M. Ah ha. It's good, I think, with your chemistry, you have a chemistry background, I think, and you're also involved in the selling side of it as well. So, you probably have got a good combination of skills which allows for this honesty.**

**W.** I think, I think I have got really good product development skills. I don't personally have very good skills at, at marketing. And probably

because the sort of person I am, you know, I'm sort of, you know, just truthful and honest and try and make, sort of, the best value product that I can. And, you know, I'm not fabulous with in the company and we don't have much in the company to help us with marketing. Its, its a bit of a slow thing for us and we could, you know, we could probably do with a bit of help in that, in that area.

We have fantastic products. We spend, you know, we spend so much more on the ingredients, you know. If the consumers, and its a, its a difficult job getting consumers to, to see this. But, you know, a bottle of our shampoo which retails for nine ninety five, and if you compare it with, you know, another product equal size that costs half the price, then but, if you have a look at the value of the ingredients that are in the bottle, you know, ours are commonly, sort of, you know, five to even ten times the value of the ingredients that are in it. So, and after all that, that is in essence the thing that you are buying. You know, that's the thing that you want to have a result, is what you have in the bottle. Not, not sort of, you know, the packaging or anything like that. You want the bottle, that 60 grams, or that 225 mil, or what ever it is to be really valuable, and ours are, you know, like liquid gold compared to our competitors, but, you know, the, the job of, of, letting consumers know that is the difficult thing.

Our web site is a fairly new initiative for us, you know, we've found in our marketing, with the very limited funds that we have for that, the best way seems to be to choose, you know, journals, for instance, like say *Nature* and *Health*. The consumers, you know, people who buy that will be our target market. And putting our brochure in there, as an insertion. We have found that sort of thing works better than, you know, having, having full page adds in glossy magazines. Because if you are going to do that, you need to do lots of it, apart from anything else.

**M. The consumers that you get will be very different than the ones that read *Cleo* and *Cosmo*.**



W. That's right, and they're very loyal too. Once people discover our product, you know, sort of they become very, very loyal and sort of introduce their friends to it. That's one very good thing about the way we do things, you know, our, our market, you know, our number of customers is small. They are, are quite a powerful group in themselves, you know they, they stay with us and let their friends know.

#### Question 6

M. Uh hm. Do you think consumers believe in anti-aging creams?

W. In the aging creams? Well, clearly, clearly they do because, because, they keep buying them. They see investment, you know, in, in their future. But, you know, somebody who looks at it as critically as I do, and I know all of the ingredients that are available for use in cosmetics, because, you know, all of them are available to me as well. The way, the way we formulate our products, we look at all the base formulation we make certainly as natural, so that the ingredients have natural derivations, so that they're not, you know, petrochemical and synthetic-that they're also, they're very safe, they don't have any nasty by-products added by the manufacturer and that sort of thing and they have quite a lot of information about that up on the web. But when you look at the, the special ingredients that are available, they're, because they're the things around which people, you know, buy things, and around which these big companies market things. We have a look at all of those and choose the one's which have the most beneficial effect when applied externally. The best value to the consumer, and they are things like, you know, avocado oil and unsaponifiables and d panthenol (pro-vitamin B5) and jojoba oils and, and vitamin E as well. We, we use things that have a proven effect and we use a number of them, not just one of them, and we use them in decent concentrations.



**M. Because that's often the problem with these creams-is that sometimes the ingredients can work, but in anti-aging creams they are in such small amounts that they don't have the desired effect anyway.**

W. The other thing is stability as well, you know, things like vitamin C is, is extremely unstable and, you know, you put, you know, one percent in a cream on the day that you make it and, you know, a week later it has gone down to, you know, point seven, and, you know, after a month its point five, and you know pretty soon you've got a very small amount in there-and often with those sorts of things too, the whole formulation has to be structured around that one ingredient and you're really restricted then in what, in what you can use. You often have to make the formula, for instance, very, very simple, or add other things that might, you know, for instance, react with the vitamin C. A lot of too, in oils that are used in cosmetics, so, you know, in evening primrose oil, and rosehip oil, and things like that - those, those oils are very unstable, they have double bonds in them. You put them in these products and they will degrade, you know, they, they will oxidise and form free radicals, and then you will get sort of free radicals effecting the whole stability of the product and also, you know, eventually causing damage to your skin as well.

**M. I am sure a lot of consumers don't know that side of it.**

W. They don't. They, they buy a product, you know. They hear that rosehip oil is fabulous for scars. Which it is; and then, you know, buy creams that have got rosehip oil in them. Now the cream doesn't say how much rosehip oil it has got in it. I wouldn't use rosehip oil, and don't use rosehip oil, in our formulations because it's just too unstable. And if, you know, if the company were going to use it-if I was working for a company and they said, you know, we want some rosehip oil in that, this-as a Chemist I would only put a very small amount in it. Because knowing it is unstable and if there is a large amount in it it's going to detriment, be detrimental to the product. So, you know, people buy these things thinking they're going to get some,

you know, some, some therapeutic effect and they don't. So I think it's really important for consumers to start, you know, asking, asking, questions. And particularly about the feature ingredients that have lead to their buying the product. You know, how much of that is in there.

**M. Yes, I think this, that's a wonderful idea that they, you know, should really learn to ask more questions and I think in the future that I might do so as well.**

**W.** Yes, mind you it is very difficult getting, getting answers, you know, because you, the only place you can ever really get through to is the marketing department, you know.

**M.** Ah, yes, yes.

**I.** They never let you through to their, their people in the lab. They're scared that they might, sort of, give away a bit too much. But, it's, it's something that should be done, you know. Ingredients in cosmetic products generally they need to spend more money on them, more of a proportion of what they spend. And, you know, the, the value added to turn over ratio in the cosmetics industry is just huge, you know, the, the amount they spend on what goes in the jar compared to how much you, the consumer actually pays for it, you know, is the biggest mark up, sort of ever, you know (Laugh). You know, buying a, buying a fifty gram cream for, you know, 50 bucks, or 70 bucks, or a hundred dollars or something like that, and for somebody like me knowing the ingredients and, you know, how much they cost it's just, just ludicrous really.